

BLITZ THE LADDER

A TEAM-BASED APPROACH TO
GETTING AHEAD IN BUSINESS

J. TODD RHOAD

FOREWORD BY
KEVIN J. FLEMING, PH.D.,
Bestselling author of 'The Half-Truth High'



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Blitz the Ladder

A Team-Based Approach to Getting
Ahead in Business

By J. Todd Rhoad



20660 Stevens Creek Blvd.
Suite 210
Cupertino, CA 95014

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What Early Reviewers Said About... BLITZ THE LADDER

"With this book, you can save yourself months and even years in moving upward and onward in your job and your career."

Brian Tracy, Bestselling Author and International Expert on Entrepreneurship and Selling

"'Blitz the Ladder' describes a compelling, contemporary, common sense approach for anyone interested in progressing in their career regardless of age, profession or industry. Todd Rhoad combines solid research with easy-to-implement tactics into a great book that should be on everyone's shortlist of must reads."

Julie Jansen, author of 'I Don't Know What I Want, But I know it's Not This'

"Brilliant! Todd Rhoad has given us huge insights and 'guru'-level practices as to how to become the very best in today's increasingly competitive workplace. This book is a 'must-have' for all employees, job seekers, and organizations who want to achieve the very best!"

Louis Carter, CEO, Best Practice Institute

"Finally, a realistic approach to meeting the requirements and obtaining the necessary recognition for promotion. This informative 'how-to' utilizes the team approach to synergistically charge the promotional process. A must read."

Jim Coates, Dean of Business and Technology, South Suburban College

"Todd Rhoad has developed a unique method for advancing your career that is invaluable whether you are just starting out or you are already a senior executive. I plan on handing out copies of *Blitz the Ladder* to all of my key contacts. You see, I'm sure that when they execute these strategies outlined in the book, they'll remember who got them to that corner office."

Mark Kuta, Author of *Think Like A CEO*

"Great balls of fire! This book is dead-on. It gives young professionals the insight and knowledge needed to successfully climb the corporate ladder."

Brien Biondi, Executive Director, Chief Executives Organization

"To all of you trying to steer the Queen Mary from the boiler room: **STOP!** Todd Rhoad has applied the best of marketing to the most important company in the world: you and your career. Learning to apply his concepts will not only help individuals, but also companies, because we all know that it's people who get things done for the company. Embed these concepts into your work system and watch your company reap the rewards."

Dan Kallman, President, Kallman Consulting"

"I wish this book had been written twenty six years ago. I recommend this book to every aspiring young professional and individual who seeks to be successful in the corporate world. *The Blitz* provides a very practical supplement for you to prepare and position yourself in seizing opportunities to make progress in the corporate ladder."

Khamsidi Lane, Senior Engineer, ATDF, Inc.

"Right on target! Destined to revolutionize professional management, Todd Rhoad gives you the keys to skyrocketing up the ladder. With piles of real-world advice on everything from impression monitoring to perception management, the lesson is clear: Start blitzing before your coworkers read this book."

Jason Sloderbeck, Vice President of Service Delivery, Positive Networks

"Todd Rhoad's *Blitz the Ladder* is a must-read book for anyone who wants to negotiate career success in a whole new world, workplace, and marketplace of accelerating change, challenge, competition, stressors, AND opportunities. It is a manual that speaks to really tapping into our collective intelligence and potential. Here are three important components of the "Blitz Approach" that make it an invaluable resource:

1. Important information for all stages of career, industry sectors, and academia;
2. A new and important look at what it takes to develop a self-sustaining team-based approach to career development;
3. Critical Information and a unique approach that is timeless, because it emphasizes the dynamics of building a critically important bond between coworkers that is driven by mutual dependence and maintained by shared success."

Irene Rivka Becker, Chief Success Officer, Just Coach It

Author

- J. Todd Rhoad, <http://www.toddrhoad.com> & <http://www.blitzteamconsulting.com>

Publisher

- Mitchell Levy, <http://www.happyabout.info>

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- Cate Calson, <http://calsongraphics.com>

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Dedication

The person wanting to achieve higher-levels of career success, which all starts with the realization that you can't do it alone.

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Finally, I want to thank my wife, Debra, for encouraging me to share my experiences with those who may learn from it and helping me define the technique that has brought us greater success. You've taught me a great deal about teaching and helping others, which is why this book was written.

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Introduction

The dream for many highly-motivated, accomplished performers is that of an uninterrupted upward climb on a corporate ladder. Their education, talents, and hard work will earn them a ride on the corporate train to the land of boundless opportunities. However, the ride is short, as the days of the company-promised career paths are long gone. Numerous forces beyond our control have nurtured the birth of a self-directed protean path. These forces also cause a redefinition of the psychological contracts, employment relationship, and career orientation between the employee and the company. Corporate consolidation, market globalization, mergers, acquisitions, and leveraged buyouts are some of these unstoppable forces. To many, such powers strike a nerve that floods the mind with fear and uncertainty. Worry, depression, and stress slowly ooze out of every pore, drip on the flames of change, and ignite feelings of disloyalty and distrust that tear at the heart of labor relations. The smart ones embrace these forces and look for ways to optimize their position. They bask in the spirit of cooperation, not confrontation.

In putting this book together, I spent many years talking with successful people to learn what works and what doesn't. Once I found the right technique, I put it to the test. What I learned is what you get in this book. Now, I don't just proclaim, promote and teach the Blitz Approach, I live it. I have my own team, and we meet every week to discuss new opportunities and issues. We've seen much success over the years. While I feel this approach is best, I felt it would be good

to let some other experts evaluate this strategy and team-based approach. I could have found no one better than Dr. Kevin Fleming.

Dr. Fleming is President and CEO of an international executive development and coaching firm concentrating on aligning best-practice ideas with neuroscience and brain excellence. He is considered one of the top intellectual minds and has recently collaborated with Ken Blanchard and Stephen Covey to release a book on successful business strategies called *Roadmap to Success*. His latest book, *The Half-Truth High*, prompted a request to speak to the Ministers and Prime Ministers of Jordan and United Arab Emirates. He is an expert columnist on "Transformations" for *Executive Decision* magazine. Dr. Fleming is a recognized leader in understanding the human mind and is now a believer in the strategies you will learn inside these pages of *Blitz the Ladder*.

As we progress through this book, we will discuss some of these forces individually and in detail, seeking ways we can benefit our careers by using the energy that is generated during these changes. Most importantly, we will learn an approach to overcoming the many challenges in building a successful career in today's corporations and build a strategy for success that will last for a lifetime. We will show you how to build a team, develop a strategy map, implement it and successfully navigate the rough waters of the corporate world. As Henry Kissinger put it so eloquently, "The real distinction is between those who adapt their purposes to reality and those who seek to mold reality in the light of their purposes." Organizations are not the same as they were a decade ago. So don't use a decade-old strategy. New times present new barriers and hurdles, which require new solutions. *The Blitz Approach* is the only solution you need to build a better future.

Foreword by Kevin J. Fleming, Ph.D.

The great poet John Donne once said, “No man is an island.” If this is true, why do we treat so much of our personal and professional lives as islands amidst the hurricane forces of our modern world? Eroding into nothingness, we sink away in our pride and celebrate emptily our perverse pleasure in being “right” with our perceived dead-on strategy—and not, ironically, in the effectiveness we all seek. But just when you thought that human nature couldn’t get its act together, along comes an innovative force like Todd Rhoad in *Blitz the Ladder* to shake things up and offer Corporate America a radical peek at what could happen if true shared dialogue occurred amongst our most coveted topics, traditionally reserved for one-on-one coaches and consultants, if any at all—that is, the coveted strategy up the corporate ladder. How could something so individually-based as the deep desire to be noticed in one’s achievement and contribution be enhanced collectively with potentially sabotaging egos all searching for the same thing? Read on.

As a shrink-turned-executive coach who has been featured in the New York Times, Christian Science Monitor, CNN, and more, I was initially doubtful when Todd approached me to read this book and write his Foreword. Why? I spent my platform-building career becoming all too aware of the dark pathologies in us all and saw more than I wanted to, when it came to the twisted mo-

tivations we all have around success at all costs. And so I was a bit of a skeptic when Todd said he had figured out a way to circumvent these perceptions about what values-aligned people could do if given the chance to not just “work together,” but transform what actually can be done to and for another human being in the workplace....a paradigm we rarely even test out but incorrectly make conclusions on. He certainly had me intrigued.

After I got off the phone with Todd, something hit me, though. I reached for my Harvard Business Review and went back to an article I initially skipped in the February 2008 edition. There was an article in there by Dan Ariely called “How Honest People Cheat.” In this fascinating article, the author discussed studies where conditions were varied to see the extent that human beings would be dishonest and self-serving. Interestingly enough, even under circumstances where people would not get caught in “doing something wrong,” people seemed to withhold and instead appeared to show an inherent “governor” to their desires. It was as if a moral conscience did in fact impose limits, even when getting more of something they wanted was right in plain view for the taking. I realized at that point that, potentially, my field of clinical psychology had done me a disservice in promoting a paradigm of pathology that was pervasive and had embedded itself into culture as a whole. Merging with the culture of fear dominant today, this thinking has not done Corporate America well, for I believe we have many leaders strategically using their “building a high EQ” training seminar content yet still espousing fear and reactivity in decision making. Mr. Rhoad courageously takes this paradigm on right between its eyes and instead offers a strategy aligned more with the real world—and

not the fear-based one we think we see but that is actually more in our own selves projecting outward onto others.

As a neuropsychologist by training, who has studied the brain directly in hundreds of professionals worldwide, I have seen firsthand the brain's inherent illusion-spinning tendencies. Seeking more to reduce dissonance around us instead of "knowing truth," it wants, more than ever, simply to be right in all it does. When we tie ourselves too tightly around the stories we tell ourselves about why and how someone acts the way they do, our perceptions become dangerous dogmas. It is at this time that we miss the humanity and what many people could do together to evoke change. Imagine if a team trained in the neuroscience of perception, and not just some cheap corporate training tool around "communication or conflict resolution," got together. Imagine, if they all were coached and guided through their convincing ways that they know as reality and became humbled, so much so that using appreciative inquiry was more important than knowing; that dialoguing was more important than the dissecting ways of a discussion, and that shared meaning could actually evolve more than consensus, or commitment more than compliance. I have done this with hundreds of participants worldwide in my neuroscience of transformation workshops and see the same potential occurring with the brilliant strategies posed in *Blitz the Ladder*.

In essence, this is not a training and development book. It is actually way more timeless and too important to be put on the shelf with a bunch of materials responsible for a mere 10% return on investment when it comes to changing how Corporate America thinks. This book is a call to change our "thinking about our thinking," and, I

believe, that it is where we need to start, on this meta-level of change. As Einstein said, “No problem was ever solved on the same level of thinking it was created on.” So why continue to try to solve the issue of moving up the corporate ladder and getting noticed when the same ol' hasn't work? Radical problems need radical solutions. Thank God this one has the added bonus of being human nature friendly. But I warn you—this book is not for the reader convinced that “he/she sees the world the way it *really* is.” Anytime someone says this, I chuckle, for I know this is a disguised request for obedience. And *Blitzing the Ladder* is not about enacting a prescription. It is all about the creative potential that rests in us all, when fear can be removed and life emerges...exponentially all around us.

Kevin J. Fleming, Ph.D.

<http://www.DrKevinFleming.com>

1

In Search of the Ladder

My father was a maintenance mechanic in a pulp wood yard for nearly half of his life, and, through this experience, he taught me one of the greatest lessons in business without speaking a single word. He was the most dedicated employee I have ever known. He was born in an era where lifetime employment was highly sought after, and so he devoted thirty four years of his life to one company. The life lessons he taught were the kind he was raised to know: "Never be late," "Do whatever they ask of you," "Never quit anything," and "Always give more than you receive." He worked hurt, sick, and tired, and never took a day off without stellar cause. It would have been a black mark on his name to have missed a day of work. It was as if somehow he would have been lesser of a man if someone was not pleased with his work. My father's job defined him.

His job role didn't change very often. The tasks he performed every day were similar. He was mechanically inclined and was often called on to resolve technical issues. So as different problems arose, he would experience a little variety from day to day. He tackled the biggest problems and solved them all. His work was ex-

ceptional. As I grew older and became an engineer, I understood just how good he was. I was always impressed with his work.

His office was outdoors, and through rain, sleet, snow, and heat, he worked. Big rail cars would usher in, drop off a load of trees, and leave to return again. The trees would be escorted by conveyor from one station to the next. The bark was stripped off, cut into pieces, and then ground down into small chips that would be used to make paper. It was dangerous work and was done regardless of what Mother Nature had in mind. Every day, trees rolled in and huge piles of chips were created. Day after day, week after week, for thirty-four years.

The job would have driven me into hysteria. But to my dad, it was what had to be done. He was a machine. At times, the job came before us; that is, my brothers and I. We understood what he was doing. Sometimes we just didn't know why he put so much into that job. Often, the guys at work would have a little cookout. Dad would take me along as if he was showing me off. On the way there, he would tell me that he didn't want me to do the same thing he does. "You can do better than this," he would say. "I want you to get an education so you don't get stuck out here," he would tell me over and over. As a kid, I didn't think much about what he was saying, but as I grew older and understood more about what he was doing and what they gave him in return, the picture became clear.

Over those thirty four years, he was promoted four times. That's about every 8.5 years. He did get increases in pay, but never enough to dig us out of our standard of living. Yet my father worked until he couldn't take it anymore. Unfortunately, this is exactly what happened. As he grew into his fifties, the hard work began to take a huge physical toll on him. He tried to get a job that would put less stress on him, but the company wouldn't budge. He had to stay where he was. He was too good at his job, and the company needed him to do what he was doing, not something else. Like a star entering the earth's atmosphere, he began to burn up. Eventually, he was driven into long-term disability and retirement.

It wasn't until many years after I had left home, finished college and took my place as a cog in the corporate machine that I realized I was falling victim to the same thing my dad did. My experience was eerily similar. My first job at a manufacturing company lasted only a few

years. That company overwhelmed me with organizational changes. They restructured twice in one year. I don't know how they could figure out if anything was working at that pace. It was almost impossible to know who you were working for or what team you were on. I eventually got lost in there too, and when I found myself, I found a new job.

My next corporate adventure was a lot more exciting and lasted twice as long as the first. I started out as a fresh college graduate cliché, working as hard as I could. There were many days when I would work on a project for ten hours straight, without taking time for anything else. I tried my best to make them glad they hired me and believe letting me go would be a huge mistake. I thought I had, because when there were problems, management didn't hesitate to call on me. My responsibilities over the years grew and grew. As new projects came in or people left, I picked up the slack. I didn't complain, because I felt it made me more valuable. However, after a few years of watching opportunities for promotion pass me by, I began to wonder if any of this was about job performance at all. I apparently misunderstood the requirements for obtaining a promotion, because taking on more responsibility and working long hours weren't getting me one. The writing on the wall was becoming more evident every day. If I wanted to stay in this position forever, they wouldn't stop me. But that's not what I wanted. I wanted to do a good job for a few years, to prove myself, and then be given a higher-level position with more responsibility. They gave me part of it, but not the part I wanted. Working longer and harder left me exhausted, so I decided to try something different. A new job.

I approached the problem from a new angle. I enrolled in college again to further my expertise in the technical arena. The new degree would earmark me as a corporate player, and ensure my success, I thought. For two years, I worked the job and school simultaneously. My weekends were almost as long as my work week while I studied fourteen hours each day. As my knowledge level grew, I tried to monitor the reaction of management. Just when I thought all my efforts were in vain, a manager approached me with a proposition. He was starting a new research group and wanted me in it. This was a higher-profile role, and it took center stage in the company's activities. The programs managed by this team were designed to take the company into a new direction. It meant a lot of pressure, but ostensibly delivered a lot of rewards in return. However, to add a new wrinkle, weeks before the group was to form, the manager that sought me out was fired. My hard

work was just about to pay off. And what should happen? The executives suddenly can't work with the manager they hired, so they fire him and hire a new one. The idea for the new group immediately took a lower priority with management and was halted before it could begin. Hope disappeared as quickly as it arose. I became totally exhausted and stopped working on my Ph.D. Moving up was going to be a lot harder than I thought it would be. It seemed as if all the things I was taught to do in order to be successful were only useful when fate granted me the opportunity. Some of us are raised to wait on others to notice us for our big break. I didn't want to wait on fate. I wanted to create my own success.

As I sat in the cafeteria at work eating my lunch, I overheard several employees, who were also MBA students, discussing their vision of the opportunities that would be spread before them once they graduated. Now, I don't typically make it a habit to eavesdrop on other's conversations, but this one was rather interesting. You see, I knew these guys fairly well. They attended local universities, and one of the guys was nationally-ranked in his business program. These non-traditional students already had numerous years of work experience and felt that an advanced degree would aid in their upward mobility. *Imagine that*, I thought. This group of individuals already had a four-year degree and had reached what my dad would have called a fairly high-level position. They were professionals in their field. At this point, they felt that an advanced degree was the only means of making progress in their career. Like me, they already tried the "work harder and longer" route, and it didn't seem to lead them to the land of milk and honey. So they chose another road. This time, they would work *smarter*. It seemed to make sense to me. If they were professionals already, surely an advanced degree would move them closer to becoming an expert in their field, which would definitely warrant a promotion to indicate a higher status or level of expertise. There it was right in front of me—a more modern version of one of the teachings from my dad. That is, now that most people on the corporate ladder have a degree, getting an advanced degree will move you up the ladder when the first degree takes you as far as it can. Why hadn't I thought of this before?

That's what these guys were trying. Perhaps, they looked at a lot of their managers and noticed they only have a four-year degree. Getting a master's degree would put them in the perfect position to assume a leadership role should the organization change. We all know that's

likely to happen. If and when it does, the executives may look down at their management team and realize their skill set is antiquated, which makes them ill-prepared to handle issues related to a changing market and workforce. Embracing the technological age, executives will desire the younger, more driven, but well-educated professionals to take the company in a new direction. In any case, they would have the skill sets needed for the future, more so than anyone else.

The guys carried on, talking about the barriers to their upward mobility. They blamed a lot of it on managers. In their situation, the managers were usually older and had more experience (as you would expect). They learned that executives had a great degree of respect for experience. Naturally, if these men wanted to stave off competition, they wouldn't choose factors that would eliminate themselves. They knew they couldn't compete with the experience that comes with age, so they chose the path of acquiring more formal education. This would allow them to work efficiently and effectively; thus, outperforming the competition should be much easier. When I heard this, I immediately thought of another childhood staple, the story of the tortoise and the hare. Then I realized that I was the hare attempting to outrun my dad. While I was getting a sufficient amount of formal education, would it be enough to win the race against an established opponent? The tortoise has been in the race much longer and has had time to create a few of his own rules. These rules would be the hurdles that the hare has to overcome. The big question was, would these guys I was listening to be able to do it? More importantly, would I?

The lessons these guys were learning were extremely important to me, because I was also an MBA student at the time and a little further behind in my program than they were. After the last bout with academia in the technical realm, I had decided to try the business route. By learning more about how all the business functions, I would be able to better position myself for new opportunities as they develop. If the company decided to create the new research group again, I could design it or help solicit new programs for them to work on. However, I had to learn about all sides of business first. As I acquired this basic business knowledge, I also had the advantage of learning lessons from those eager MBA students I overheard in the cafeteria. As they applied their knowledge, some things would work and some wouldn't. My plan was to take their lessons and modify them to increase my own success.

One year after they graduated, not one of these men had moved up in their area, nor did they see any future possibilities. Everyone was still in the same position. Their managers didn't even recognize them for their achievement. Not a single word was uttered. With my own graduation approaching, I felt it was time to talk with them to gain a firsthand understanding of what was happening. Having known them for many years, I was sure they would share their experiences with me. I wanted to know if I was wasting my time. Through many discussions, they openly shared their views. They felt that their efforts were above and beyond what most of their peers—and even their managers—were doing to enhance their career development. There were no managers in the company that worked all day and then went to college all night, like they had chosen to do. This was no small commitment. It took two years to complete the degree. Two of the students were married and had several small children. The quest for the MBA while working and raising a family was an extremely daunting task, both professionally and personally. Yet, after all was said and done, none of them were even recognized for this accomplishment. They were quite confused about it. While they didn't have a great deal of work experience, they were in the middle of their careers and now possessed a graduate degree. Their new confidence prepared them to tackle the company's most difficult issues, yet no one ever asked for their input. The company never responded to their requests. It was as if nothing had changed. In fact, nothing really had, except them. So, after putting forth such a great effort to improve their skills, they found that significant expertise alone couldn't propel them upward.

I became afraid that I would fall victim to the same problems they encountered, so I resolved to get advice from the “experts.” Advice from the average “climb the corporate ladder” book didn't prove to be very useful. Many of the experts are academics or consultants, who attempt to understand the difficulties employees are facing, and then offer solutions on how to handle the situations. They write from the viewpoint of someone who is already at the top and looking down, rather than at the bottom looking up. As a result, these books only offered broad generalizations that were hard to identify with and implement effectively.

The things these authors pointed out didn't make a lot of sense to me then, and some of it still doesn't. Much of what they teach is significant to executives in the positions many of us seek to occupy. Some books discussed pointers such as how to not embarrass your boss and how

to dress appropriately, walk, talk, act, rededicate yourself to your current position, avoid thinking like an entrepreneur, and so on. Much of that sounded like the life lessons my father taught. Still, others suggested that you must be able to recognize when change is needed and then make it. People know this; however, what the books fail to do is tell you what to do with this information. It is hard to know when to change, how to see the change as it really occurs, and how to make the correct adjustments to offset it. These books sounded like clichés with catchy titles.

The problem is that the advice is relative. Many of these books speak in parables. Consider one particular parable that takes place in a maze. The four characters in the maze spend their time searching for cheese, a symbol related to our livelihood, such as our careers, jobs, or industries we work in. Two of the characters just want cheese and do whatever it takes to get it. The other two characters procrastinate when it is moved, remaining unwilling to change and hopeful the cheese will return, while the other two characters run off in search of it. The main point of the story is that people must be alert to changes in the cheese and willing to search for new sources when the cheese runs out.¹

To look at his advice in more detail, let's consider a situation that is a fairly common event in business today, organization restructuring. Your company was just purchased by a larger company to gain access to one of your customers. The parent company determines that portions of your company are no longer necessary, so they institute a new organization structure, which needs fewer people to support. Many people will keep their jobs, but many others will get the opportunity to find a new one. Unfortunately, you are one of the people that get to search for the new cheese. Most likely, you would not have been able to sense a change in the job, since management usually keeps the sale of the company confidential for fear of inducing a mass exodus. So what do you do now? You don't have a future at the company, so you must find a new one. Just as in the Johnson's book, the cheese moved. Now, you have to find new cheese. While Johnston brings up a good point, his advice is oversimplified. As in this example, some change is simple and requires little consideration to identify the need for change.

1. Spencer Johnson, *Who Moved My Cheese* (New York: Putnam, 2002).

The real complications in decision making come from the subtleties of job change and how to actually change the situation. Let's reconsider the previous example. Now, you are one of the people that keep their job but you get a new manager. You immediately recognize that your personalities will clash. Not willing to lose your job, you try to work around the personality differences, yet it still takes an emotional toll on you. You begin to feel the happiness drain from the job. You may also realize that, over time, these things can degrade your quality of life. Sure, you need to change, but how and when do we change? In the previous case of losing your job, the solution is easy: find a new job as fast as possible. In the case of losing the joy in your job, it's much more difficult. Recognizing and accepting that change is important yet isn't sufficient in itself.

As in the case of recognizing change, it is difficult to transform generic advice into a strategy that would make the most of what you have to offer. As with getting a new manager, the situation may change, creating the need to identify the appropriate change. Many of the Fortune 500 companies change every year, so this can lead to a lot of time and effort just responding to changes in managers. In one company I interviewed, a business development manager stated he had seven managers in one year. It's not too difficult to imagine the challenge of understanding how each one felt about each important factor the experts identify as critical for success. It could be done, but it would just take too much time away from daily job responsibilities. In the cases of constant change, it may be too time-consuming to respond to each change and less beneficial to apply generic advice.

After I graduated with my MBA, I began to meet with the guys from the cafeteria to learn more about what techniques they had tried to improve their career. Each one told stories of their individual efforts and their outcomes. I tried to absorb it all. Once I had put all the pieces together, I figured out what the puzzle was telling me. In essence, climbing the corporate ladder alone is not the best approach. It is too easy to make a mistake and stalemate years of effort. While Johnson's advice about recognizing change has merit, it's not always best to just accept it. As the guys from the cafeteria and I were learning, some responses to change are best planned, especially if a particular outcome is desired. We had found moving up the corporate ladder to be difficult, but I wasn't giving up. There had to be a better way than going to college, getting a job, and working long hours in hopes of being rewarded.

These things are important, but they'll only carry your career so far. The cafeteria gang was living proof of that concept. I always knew, there had to be a better way. And, I found one.

I decided the cafeteria gang and I would all be much better served if we combined our efforts rather than spinning hopelessly alone. It became clear to me that the corporate system that we worked in was set up to encourage competition; in other words, it was built on the concept that individuals would need to outperform each other to receive any rewards offered by management. In this manner, the organization would profit from an elevated level of performance, most likely in the form of productivity and efficiency. While this is obviously advantageous for the organization, it provides no guarantees of career success for the employees, despite their performance. This is because the organization uses Forced Ranking, which requires a ranking of all employees based on pre-specified performance. Jack Welch, retired Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of General Electric (GE), made this tool popular and used this in his performance management system to remove the bottom ten percent of performers each year. Unfortunately, this means that even good performers are at risk, especially if they work in a high-performing group. This also implies that, if you fail to meet expectations, you could be ranked low and at an even greater risk of losing your employment with the company.

In such head-to-head competition, how do you guarantee success? If you find yourself on a highly efficient and effective team, such as playing golf with five Tiger Woods, how can you ensure you'll perform well enough to survive the ranking system? After teeing off on the first hole, you are sure to realize that it would be considerably more beneficial for several individuals to work together to be truly competitive against better players. In work, just like the PGA tour, you don't get a mulligan. With Forced Ranking, it's hard to recover from a bad shot. Your best bet is to not make the bad shot in the beginning. In thinking about how to compete head-to-head against a high-quality player like Tiger Woods, I realized the best option is to not try it alone. Sure, it's not head-to-head, but the odds of coming out on top are a lot better.

My ever-so-eager cafeteria colleagues and I became very close friends, so it didn't make sense that we compete with each other for opportunities. We simply decided who was the best match and began to market him for the position. And with that little change, the *Blitz*

concept was born. I then created an informal team to test how such a concept would work in a highly-political environment. The team was comprised of real go-getters. They weren't necessarily at the bottom of the organization, but they had definitely reached a plateau. Just like many of us. They had tried many things to overcome it, but failed to find a solution. Just like many of us. Luckily, this didn't seem to extinguish their drive. They still wanted to climb the ladder and a little failure wouldn't slow them down. Just like, well, you get the point. To them, it was a learning process, and they had just learned what didn't work. Now, it was time for new lesson.

After creating this team approach, we gave ourselves two years to evaluate it. We didn't dive in with any preconceived notions. We wanted to see how it would work with as little planning as possible. Over the next two years, we helped each other develop new skills, identify new opportunities, create a simple strategy and implement it. We stood up for each other and utilized our team skills to accomplish our work. Collectively we worked less than we ever did separately. The only major area of effort was that we would meet often to discuss our progress and what we wanted to do. The group had more than one set of eyes, giving us the benefit of diverse perspectives, which we fully intended to use to seek out new opportunities. Over this time period, two of the group members were promoted and one was given an opportunity to lead a new program to develop a new line of business. Our efforts didn't stop here. We still meet today and make every effort to support our team. The important concepts learned in this small demonstration are the essence of this book. Considerable reflection was performed to evaluate how we could build a strategy to improve our upward mobility. It's all in here.

As you progress through the book, keep your current approach in mind, and consider the evidence I'll put before you as to why it may not be sufficient. Corporations are changing constantly, and so must your methods if you wish to take full advantage of any and all opportunities. We have achieved considerable success with a little planning. Now combine this with the strategies defined within, and you'll begin to see how you can compel others to treat you differently. Once this initiation begins, the rest of the process will be as simple as the whole concept: Easy to visualize, easy to materialize.

2 The Traditional Career Development Resources

Whether you're an experienced professional or new to industry, charting a course that will propel you up the corporate ladder is no small feat. And if you're waiting for someone to do that for you, it may be a considerable amount of time before you see the plan, if at all. When it comes to finding help within an organization, we naturally think our immediate surroundings provide ample support for such a cause. Unfortunately, we too often focus on using the wrong resources. If you're fresh out of college and new to industry, you're likely to choose the resources that just hired you, such as Human Resources (HR) and your immediate manager, with the hopes that they will also have planned something beyond your immediate job. But are these the best resources to use? Do they have the best insight into the company to provide a good career strategy? This chapter will answer these questions by providing insight on how organizational HR departments and managers develop and plan for the replacement of their talent. We will also take a look at how managers address their own career development and what impact that will have on your career.

Development of Corporate Talent

If you really want to be considered for future promotions and opportunities, you first have to understand how companies identify and evaluate talent in their workforce. Unfortunately, you may need to perform considerable research, because most organizations don't identify talent using a well-defined process, nor are any of these processes common and used throughout many organizations. While almost every company has their own definition of talent, it is used here to define those individuals with specific skills that can produce above-average levels of the company's products when provided the appropriate training and guidance. In a breakthrough study on talent within organizations, results show that a high-performing (or talented) employee brings in almost twice as much business or produces twice as much product as the average performer.²

So, how do organizations identify talent? You may be surprised to know that most companies don't measure it at all. Shockingly, less than half of the organizations that participated in a survey possessed an organized procedure to identify and develop future leadership candidates. This report also indicated, of those organizations with a plan, the average effectiveness rating was only 4.8 out of 10, where a score of 10 is equivalent to "extremely effective."³ Obviously, developing careers for employees is not an organization's main priority and most likely not a priority at all. Their major goal is to create wealth for the shareholders by providing a product or service to a customer base at a profit. Therefore, companies don't typically apply a great deal of resources to ensure employees have a suitable career path. As the survey indicates, most organizations don't apply much effort at all. If your company has a plan, learn all you can about it. If your company doesn't use a defined process, the *Blitz Approach* will be even more critical to your career development. Companies without formal processes for identifying their next leaders will use subjective data to make these crucial leadership placement and promotional decisions. This means that everyone isn't on equal ground when it comes to being

2. Elizabeth, Chambers, et.al., "The War for Talent," The McKinsey Quarterly no. 3, 1998.

3. "Succession Plans: Is Your Company's Future in Good Hands?" Contractor's Business Management Report, February 2004, p.2-4.

evaluated for higher-level positions. For that reason, decisions on successors may not follow any logical path and may be difficult to comprehend.

Career Development with Your Immediate Manager

Naturally, we first look to our managers to get an understanding of our career possibilities. After all, they do the hiring, firing, performance reviews, and succession planning for the whole organization. No one should have a clearer picture of how far we can go up the corporate ladder. But, is this really the case? Are managers the best “people” managers in companies today? Managers are certainly bombarded with numerous tasks, for which some have an inability to discern what must be done now and what can be done later. Quite often, managers are forced to put off the responsibilities defined in their job description to entertain tasks handed down from a higher-level manager. With a large number of requests from above, you can begin to see how managers can lose touch with their “real” responsibilities, one of which is career development. *This doesn't seem likely*, you say! Well, consider the following situations. If they've happened to you, then you understand how important it is for you to accept ownership of your own career development.

An employee was sitting quietly in a conference room, waiting for his boss to come in the room to discuss his annual performance review. The employee felt really good about his progress and anticipated a good raise in salary for the year. As the manager came in and was about to sit down, he asked one single question that put his yearly performance, as perceived by his boss, into a clear perspective. His boss turned to him and asked “What is it that you do?” There can't be any clearer sign that your boss is busy working on something else rather than keeping track of what his subordinates do on a daily basis. Managers constantly provide signals that they aren't concentrating on those below them. Has your boss ever asked you to copy him on your e-mails or meeting notices so he knows what you are doing? Yet, he never shows up to the meetings or engages in any of the e-mail traffic. This is a quick-and-easy way to get information on the people you speak with and the details of your work. This is probably an indication that your boss is too busy.

Of course, looking at only a few examples is not sufficient. Considerable research has been done on this issue. Let's consider a study done on hundreds of managers over a period of more than five years. This study found most managers are shrouded in inefficiency due to a lack of personal discretion or a feeling of too little control.⁴ Managers are typically bombarded with an overwhelming number of tasks. Most of these demands are ones they consider to be critical to the company's operation and, subsequently, more important than your career. Managers just don't have the time to help you. The only time you can expect to hear about your future is performance review time, and, as we've already seen, this may not be an enjoyable encounter. Additionally, managers are finding that executives will maintain the control of the companies and the players on their management team. This phenomenon became very popular during the 1990s, when downsizing removed much of middle management. Unfortunately, we don't seem to have recovered from this. Despite this thinning out of the management structure, lower-level managers haven't gained any more authority. As a result, your boss only has the authority to make a recommendation for promotion. While this recommendation is important to have, upper-level manager doesn't need that recommendation to promote you.

To further complicate the development of your career strategy, organizations don't promote what you would expect; that is, people doing their job well. Employees that have been on the job for many years are self-sufficient and need little direction to do their tasks. This issue is further perpetuated by improvements in technology and the ability of the younger generations to make full use of it. An employee can quickly become a functional contributing member of the organization shortly after they are hired. Managers don't have to spend considerable time training and educating them on the job—they learn their job *on* the job. Combining the experienced workers with the tech-savvy and on-the-job learners, managers have a considerable pool of talent to choose from. The workplace is becoming an automated environment. Managers simply throw in a few resources, set a few dials, and then hit “start.” The rest takes care of itself. If it can work this well, why mess with it?

4. Sumantra Ghoshal and Heike Bruch, “Reclaim Your Job,” Harvard Business Review, March 2004, p41-45.

Now, this isn't the only reason why managers cease to recognize their best workers. If you ask managers why they fail to manage one of the most important resources in their organization, their reasons may not be too surprising. The findings of a study of 50 CEOs, business unit leaders, and human resource professionals from around the globe provided some insight.⁵ Here's some of what they discovered:

- Senior leadership doesn't spend enough time on talent management strategies.
- Line managers fail to categorize their people as top, average, or underperforming.
- Line managers fail to deal with chronic underperformance by employees.
- Managers have a lack of understanding about the organization's most critical jobs and succession planning.

These results imply that managers aren't really focusing their efforts on developing your career. As these results indicate, they aren't even concerned with the performance of the organization either, at least not enough to remove poor performers. If they are engaged in career development, their focus is too narrow. This "silo" thinking results in limited opportunity for those outside of the manager's division, group, or focus. Even if they can formulate a plan they can work with, they don't. As with most corporate policies and procedures that get handed down to employees, if it's not easy, it won't get done. Therefore, your best strategy is to do the work for them. Let them know where you should be, how you are getting there, and when you're ready.

Often we overlook another extremely important fact; that is, our managers want to get promoted too. If your manager is spending considerable time networking around the organization and less time on training, development and leadership, you can bet they are working on their career mobility.⁶ For lower-level managers, emulating upper-level managers is the fastest way to become one. If your manager really

5. Matthew Guthridge, Asmus Komm, and Emily Lawson, "The people problem in talent management," The McKinsey Quarterly No. 2, 2006.

6. Cynthia Pavett and Alan Lau, "Managerial Roles, Skills and Effective Performance," Academy of Management Proceedings, 1982, p95-99.

wants to join the ranks of the upper-level, they'll need to spend considerable time on these activities. This means, they'll have less time for you, and, if they have less time for you, you'll be left to figure it out on your own.

If you choose your immediate manager as guidance for developing your career, you may be disappointed at the response you get. They have career paths too, and the actions they take to improve their career mobility can distance them from you and your career. To determine if this could be an issue in your career, you may want to understand whether or not your boss aspires to move upward in his or her career. For this understanding, it is useful to look at Henry Mintzberg's delineation of managerial roles, which describes the job activities of senior managers;⁷ additionally, these roles have also been evaluated against lower and middle-level managers.⁸ A role can be defined as an organized set of behaviors. It is also important to note that if your manager is from a different culture, these roles may not be totally applicable or easily discernable.⁹ Mintzberg breaks the roles into three categories: Interpersonal, Informational, and Decisional. Each category is comprised of several roles. The functions associated with each role are defined in the table below. It's not terribly important to know the exact role your managers play, but it is useful to have an idea of the roles they prefer, because it can indicate how motivated they are to move up the corporate ladder. If they aren't eager to move up, they probably won't be eager to help you.

7. Henry Mintzberg, "The Nature of Managerial Work," New York: Harper & Row, 1973.

8. Cynthia Pavett and Alan Lau, "Managerial Roles, Skills and Effective Performance," Academy of Management Proceedings, 1982, p95-99.

9. Cecil Pearson, Samir Chatterjee and Katsuji Okachi, "Managerial Work Role Perceptions in Japanese Organizations: An Empirical Study," International Journal of Management, Vol. 21, No. 1, March 2003, pp101-108.

Table 1: Mintzberg's Ten Managerial Roles

Category	Roles	Function
Interpersonal	Figurehead	Performs ceremonial and symbolic duties, such as greeting visitors and signing legal documents.
	Leader	Provides the motivation and activation of employees combined with the staffing, training, and associated duties.
	Liaison	Refers to the self-developed network of external contacts and informers who provide favors and information.
Informational	Monitor	Seeks and receives information, scans periodicals and reports, and maintains personal contacts.
	Disseminator	Transmits information from outside the organization to the inside members with some interpretation and is mostly about the value positions of the organization's influencers.
	Spokesperson	Transmits information from the outside, but this information is more related to the plans, policies, actions, and results of the organization.

Table 1: Mintzberg's Ten Managerial Roles

Category	Roles	Function
Decisional	Entrepreneur	Initiates improvement projects, identifies new ideas, and delegates idea responsibility to others.
	Disturbance Handler	Takes corrective action during disputes or crises, resolves conflicts among subordinates, and adapts to environmental crises.
	Negotiator	Represents department during negotiation of union contracts, sales, purchases, budgets, and represents departmental interests.
	Resource Allocator	Decides who gets resources and performs scheduling, budgeting, and establishment of priorities.

So, what roles might you expect when you look at your managers? Historically, we've always assumed managers spend their time planning, organizing, coordinating, and controlling. However, if they are asking you what you do on a daily basis, this is hardly the case. As Mintzberg's research indicates, upper-level managers place a high level of importance on the entrepreneur and leader behaviors. This is also true for middle and lower-level managers. The leader role is driven by the fact that the manager is held responsible for the work of his subordinates, such as the hiring and training of the staff. If your manager focuses on improving company performance, work procedures, or reviewing projects to gather learning for future projects, they favor the entrepreneurial role. The entrepreneur role is typically the domain of top-level managers. However, lower- and middle-level managers see this role as necessary for success, even though it may not give them higher performance ratings.¹⁰ The leader role also holds high importance with all levels of management. Its duties include solving subordinate personal issues, aligning employee's goals with the organization's goals, and

10. Cynthia Pavett and Alan Lau, "Managerial Roles, Skills and Effective Performance," Academy of Management Proceedings, 1982, p95-99.

providing job-related feedback, training and guidance. The importance of this role is most likely due to the job description. Basically, the job description states that the leader duties are required tasks, but I'm sure most of us know that the actions of many managers, or the time they spend in these activities, define its "real" importance.

Why do managers spend more or less time in any particular role? What is their motivation to play a particular role? Surely, it can't be because it's in their job description. Does increasing behavior in a particular role provide a higher return on their investment of time? You bet. Research results show that spending more time in the leader or technical role comes at the expense of the other behavioral roles, which will tend to lower performance appraisal results and has an inverse relationship to promotion rate. Now, that's a serious result that can greatly impact your career support plans. The leader role, where managers develop the skills of those under their command, has an inverse relationship to promotions. In other words, managers who do develop their subordinates are promoted less than those who do not; in turn, this is motivation *not* to do it. So, you won't see too many managers who develop their employees moving quickly up the corporate ladder.

On the other hand, a manager seeking to move up the ladder will spend more time on activities and behaviors that support their own promotion. Studies define the liaison role as beneficial to improving performance ratings; this role can also be described as networking. Some activities that define this role include establishing external contacts and developing working relationships with other department managers. The importance of the liaison role to the managers in this study verifies the existence of a strong political aspect in the workplace and, to some extent, that they realize they must play the political game to enhance their career mobility.

As previously noted, managers have a considerable number of factors that drive them to neglect career development duties for their subordinates. These factors include an inordinate number of tasks to perform, an inability to prioritize which tasks must be done, little support from senior management, and lastly, personal career ambition. The important thing to remember here is that managers are usually too busy to help you develop a career and, if they have time for career development, it won't be yours.

The Human Resources Department and Selecting Tomorrow's Leaders

Let's now take a look at how another group supports career development. A human resource department can be a valuable asset; however, you must understand, HR departments alone are not highly effective in succession planning and talent retention. They, too, have difficulty assessing talent and little power to retain, hire and remove employees. Strangely enough, HR is often called upon to aid in the identification of the company's next leaders in a process called Succession Planning. So, who does succession planning concern? Usually, this assessment is grounded around the potential of the current lower-level and mid-level managers of the organization. Why is this important to you? If you want to be a candidate in the assessment of talent for future management positions, you can't be oblivious to their selection criteria and still be in the running. Succession planning is an extremely difficult process that involves determining the future requirements of the organization and the type of individuals who best meet those requirements. It is also a vital first step to ensuring organizational focus, relevancy, and sufficient capacity.

Industry today is a jungle. Business has become an intricate weave of ever-changing social and funding trends, constituent needs, and technologies, which forces organizations to constantly fine-tune their focus. This constant barrage of transformation requires an ever-changing set of characteristics for the successors to be defined. Such change also demands a well-thought-out strategy to monitor and maintain a high potential workforce. While many bigger companies recognize this need, smaller companies usually do not. Consequently, as these companies go through what seems to be never-ending change, such as restructuring, downsizing, buy-outs and so on, they will struggle to identify new leaders and managers. In some cases, small companies who fail to perform the function find themselves struggling to stay afloat and often end up selling the business. As we'll learn shortly, even the big companies that engage in determining the next leaders of their company find their process difficult and insufficient.

When it comes to succession planning, there are several issues shaping executive decisions. These issues are:

1. a mismatch between available skills and those actually required,
2. the need for better succession planning, and
3. more HR leadership.

Another important consideration is that a large portion of senior management is nearing retirement with little to no investment into the depth of their management, leaving no development of a second tier of leadership poised for action.¹¹ Why is it so difficult? First, most HR departments lack the expertise to perform strategic job analyses to determine the critical success factors for those positions. This analysis would determine the required behaviors, attitudes, and skills needed to perform the job. Secondly, in many organizations, the HR department does not have the responsibility to perform the analysis. Unfortunately, the growing trend in many small and medium-size organizations is to outsource many HR functions such as staffing, recruiting, training, development, payroll, and health benefits; thereby, putting the responsibility of defining the company's future in outsiders hands. Thirdly, organizations in the 1990s engaged in downsizing by removing much of their middle management in an effort to reduce cost and improve the financial performance of their companies. This reduced the size of the talent pool for succession planning. If HR had any responsibility for succession planning, their job became considerably more difficult. In most cases, this planning is all but forgotten. Profitability has to come first. Lastly, executives are choosing to stay in the top seats of the organization much longer, postponing their retirement and replacement for many years. Undoubtedly, as management continues to streamline their business by reducing and replacing their workforce, labor capital management will become a serious strategic issue.

Now, let's take a closer look at what companies look for in candidates for succession planning. Typically, a candidate's potential is assessed with regards to several factors. The first important factor is personal interest. Regardless if the potential candidate excels at all of factors soon described, a lack of a personal interest in occupying a manage-

11. Monica Oss, "Human Resources Problems Move to the Fore," Behavioral Health Management, September 2002, p6.

ment position will override the succession plans. Many professionals specializing in specific fields, such as engineering, accounting, and many others, choose to remain in their field of expertise and not engage in the management of areas outside of this area (or even inside it). This decision may be somewhat career-limiting, due to the quantity of higher-level positions within their own area of expertise. By limiting their focus, they also risk being labeled a specialist, thereby removing themselves from management's immediate pool of potential candidates for future management positions.

The second important factor is past performance. Those who have performed at a substandard level in the past, will most likely perform at the same level in the future. This is the management mentality. Managers don't consistently monitor your progress. If you've had poor performance in the past and recently stepped up your game, most likely, they won't know about it. Sometimes, managers even cause an employee's poor performance. In many cases, individuals with high potential are still perceived as low performers, because it is possible to succumb to what many people call the "Peter" principle.¹² Developed by Dr. Laurence J. Peter in 1969, it states that employees in a hierarchical organization will typically advance to their highest level of competence only to be promoted to the next higher-level, where they are incompetent (and stay there). This is a result of using promotion as a reward for successful performance. Reaching this level of incompetence is not due to the requirement for a greater level of skills for the higher-ranking position, but may only be due to the difference in the skills required from the previous position in which the employee excelled. Whether you did it or they did it, the perception of your performance will have a huge impact on your ability to get on the most desired list.

Another interesting and humorous theory, similar to the Dr. Peter's principle, is the one developed by Scott Adams.¹³ It is based on his comic strip character and the concept where many times the least competent, least smart employees are promoted; management doesn't want them to be doing the work directly. So, instead of dealing with the low performance issue, they promote these low performers to higher positions

12. Laurence J. Peter and Raymond Hull, *The Peter Principle: Why Things Always Go Wrong* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1969).

13. Tricia Bisoux, "Funny Business," BizEd, November 2002, p16-21.

(where they can eventually do more damage). In either case, the issue is the individual's skill sets do not match the requirements for the position. Usually this stems from a failure to generate a skill set requirement for the position and the lack of an assessment of the individual's skill set prior to filling the position.

The third important factor in assessing the potential is individual intelligence and aptitude. Significant intelligence is not crucial for the potential successor, as the previous principles indicate. The smartest people don't always rise to the top of the organization. This implies other skills are needed to be successful in these positions. While extreme intelligence isn't necessary, candidates must be able to quickly adapt to a changing business environment. Recognition of the necessity for improved skill with the ability and desire to obtain them are essential. For Sonoco Products Company, one of the world's largest packaging manufacturers, the plant manager is one of the first positions on the road to executive consideration. They regard this "linchpin" position as a proving ground for potential successors, because it provides one of the first opportunities to manage numerous functions of their industry, such as labor and community relations.¹⁴ This position tests their aptitude in dealing with issues from many different occupations experiencing many different issues. This experience aids in their development and prepares them for the next level, Area Manager, where they will have responsibility for numerous manufacturing facilities. While intelligence and aptitude are not the only skills needed to obtain a top seat, they are quite necessary.

Another important consideration in assessing the potential of the talent pool is supply and demand. If there is only one individual in the running for succession, then, naturally, advanced skill and intelligence are not necessarily critical. On the other hand, if the pool of potentials is abundant, competition may drive the required skill level higher. In 2000, after the population increase of the early eighties had moved onward and upward, a new generation of college graduates began the quest. This created a significant amount of competition for the brightest of graduates, rendering the value of their education somewhat less important than their predecessors. The talent pool for higher-level positions was already filled with many educated potential candidates.

14. Jay Conger and Robert Fulmer, "Developing Your Leadership Pipeline," Harvard Business Review, December 2003, p76-84.

With education ceasing to be a differentiating factor, these young graduates would have to look to another factor to distinguish themselves from the competition. One of the few factors affecting one's chances in a large supply pool is the requirement of a specific skill set. If the skills are in high demand, then this requirement will naturally reduce the size of the qualified pool, and vice versa. Assessing the level of high-demand skills is a difficult task for HR departments. This is due to the complexities in measuring the skill in potential candidates and then determining the level of skill they actually possess (e.g. novice, expert, etc.).

The expected return on the employee is also considered, which includes such factors as age, gender, race, sex, mobility, and health. Age is a crucial factor for inclusion in the succession talent pool. Typically, the age range for inclusion is 35 to 55 years old. The younger a potential candidate is, the less time they've had to accumulate a wide range of experience within the organization. Limited experience is sometimes desired by management, because it implies limited bias about the company that managers would have to overcome in developing the potential successor. On the other extreme, increased age usually coincides with increased experience. While significant experience may seem beneficial at first, organizations usually view it as a negative, as it tends to indicate the employee may be "set" in their thinking and not open to development of the new skills required for the business. Older participants in the workforce must make substantial contributions to the organization to be considered a high performer. For example, in discussions with an engineer from a high-tech company, older engineers were expected to consistently publish five articles and two patents each year. This requirement is regarded as a stretch goal because it is really hard to accomplish. To stand out as a high performer, older engineers would have to greatly exceed these requirements. Such challenges are not placed on younger engineers. Therefore, opportunity to excel exists for those young engineers who could publish and develop patents.

Succession planning not only requires the matching of skills, it must ensure these identified individuals also share the organization's values and vision. The values of the organization are passed down from upper management and should be ever-present in the organization's culture. While it may sound a little strange to be concerned with this after you are hired, it brings up the point that many organizations fail to match

employees with the company's culture (or develop a good "fit"). Such incompatibilities result in employee turnover and, even possibly, the loss of high performers targeted as successors. According to Eileen Garger, consultant for human resource professionals, the primary basis for job loss over the past thirty years is the fact that departing employees never really fit the culture of the organization.¹⁵ This tends to push companies away from hiring particular skill sets to hiring for personality or mind-set. Companies assume they can teach the required job skills much easier than "fit" them to the culture. But this most likely will not be a situation that will propel you up the chain.

Demographics of the current workforce provides for a limited supply of senior executives due to retirement and, as a result, a growing demand. Never has this dilemma been more evident than in the electrical power industry. The Tennessee Valley Authority greatly reduced its nuclear workforce in the 1990s while offering early retirements and abandoning experienced hiring and college recruitment. By 1998, the average age of their staff was forty seven, with normal retirement around fifty five.¹⁶ Their incentive programs, geared at filling the gaps, were normally taken by the younger professionals who were more mobile; thus, leaving a huge gap in management. Couple this with the fact that the overall mid-level pool of successors (age 35-44) has diminished and the demand for their skill set is of a higher caliber (due to the increasing need for greater technology fluency and global market awareness) and it is easy to see why organizations have difficulty finding their next leader.¹⁷

As you seek to use managers and HR departments to further your career, you'll run into many challenges. HR departments don't get too terribly involved in career development. They occupy more of a backseat role in that they typically manage whatever process the executives dictate; they don't make the major decisions. As for the managers, they are more focused on the pressures of the job that drive

15. Eileen Garger, "Holding on to High Performers: A Strategic Approach to Retention," *Compensation & Benefits Management*, Autumn 1999, p10-17.

16. John Juliano, and Michael Valocchi, "The Aging Workforce: What Can You Do About It?" *Electric Light and Power*, January 2004, Vol. 82, Issue 1.

17. Robert Fulmer and Jay Conger, *Growing Your Company's Leaders: How Great Organizations Use Succession Management to Sustain Competitive Advantage* (New York: AMACOM, 2004).

them to take on too much work, encourage interruption, respond quickly to every stimulus, seek the tangible and avoid the abstract, make decisions in small increments, and do everything abruptly. If you are dead set on using these resources, your only hope is to somehow discern whether or not the managers are seeking to move up and trying to play the political game. If they are, convince them to help you by offering to help them. Making friends in HR can't hurt, either. They can get your credentials in front of the right people. Again, you'll have to weigh out the return on your efforts and decide who you should influence first.

3 An Introduction to the Blitz Approach

Most everyone would agree that finding a good strategy for climbing the corporate ladder is a difficult task. Often, our first impulse is to use the most abundant resource for developing careers: advice. Advice comes in many forms and offers many theories of how to move up. Many sources will tell you that you need to improve your attire, engage in challenging work, gain more accomplishments, become a better speaker, avoid embarrassing your boss, improve your social skills, network inside and outside the company, and so on. Others may indicate that you need to develop your soft power so that you can easily coerce, induce, and attract.¹⁸ Maybe you need to develop more charisma, become a better listener, demonstrate a better attitude or improve your ability to recognize the needs of others. Yet, other advice-givers may ask you to learn from your bad behaviors, such as seeing the world in black and white, always swinging for the fence, constantly avoiding conflict, and doing too much.¹⁹ D'Alessandro proposes that one should

18. Joseph Nye, "The Benefits of Soft Power," HBS Working Knowledge <<http://tinyurl.com/2cxf72>> August 2, 2004.

19. James Waldroop and Timothy Butler, *The 12 Bad Habits That Hold Good People Back* (Currency/Double Day, October 2001).

accept tasks that others refuse, being honest and responsible.²⁰ While most of the advice from these sources is useful, it is too difficult to understand how you will put it all into a plan of action to improve your skills and mobility.

If you are lacking in many of these skills, you could spend all of your spare time at work building these attributes with no guarantee that you are developing the skills correctly, or even if anyone will notice. Putting advice to work for you is difficult. One big problem in improving yourself is that you must know where you are. By that, I mean, you will have to know how others perceive you with respect to each bit of advice such as being honest, confrontational, overeager, lovable, competent, etc. The approach presented here can help you overcome many of the difficulties in rising up the ladder—such as interpreting advice—through one simple technique; that is, the “Blitz.”

The *Blitz Approach*, or just the “Blitz,” helps surpass many of the common hurdles found by individual climbers in almost any environment, and, especially, a competitive work environment. Individual climbers usually identify easily with one of the most difficult barriers: competition. A competitive environment promotes a win/lose situation where your success comes at the expense of others, which further intensifies the competitive spirit. Personal goals usually take a short-term approach and concentrate on reaching the next step, not the final goal. Now, this is not to suggest the Blitz Approach will get you to your goal in one giant leap. It will, however, help you determine the characteristics needed and develop the strategy and skills for each position as you move up the corporate ladder, despite any roadblocks that may exist.

A major drawback to the typical relationships created in a competitive culture is that they are propped up by coercion and involve single-point contacts, so you feel like a burglar sneaking around the neighborhood, scoping house by house to see what people have that you might want. This inevitably generates a lack of trust among competitors with little desire to share in risk. Then, if you commit a political faux pas, you're on your own to suffer the consequences. No one will help clean up the

20. D'Alessandro, D., *Career Warfare: 10 Rules for Building a Successful Personal Brand on the Business Battlefield* (McGraw-Hill, November 2003).

mess or minimize the actual impact. Your fate will be left to those in the communication network. But you don't have to rely on such a fate anymore. You can control much more than you think. In fact, a big part of the Blitz Approach is to control what others think (or perceive).

Managing Perception

To describe this approach in just one word would be a challenge, because it encompasses so much, but if necessary, the best candidate would have to be *perception*. Perception deals with how we recognize, transform, and organize sensory information—what we see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. It is closely related to all higher order cognitive functions, including reasoning, problem solving, memory, etc. Our perceptions influence our behavior. So, if we desire to modify someone's behavior, we simply begin by modifying their perception. I was a victim to this concept many years ago in college. My professor walked into the classroom with a package in his hand. Standing front and center of the classroom, he slowly pulls what appears to be a carton of eggs out of the package and carefully places it on the table in front of him. He opens the container and removes one egg. He breaks it on the edge of a glass and empties the egg's contents while all eyes are fixed on his every move. With a firm grip, he picked up the carton with the remaining eggs and heaved it up into the air high over the middle of the classroom. Everyone in the room scattered in all directions to avoid the inevitable scramble. Surprisingly enough, the eggs were fake and simply bounced off the floor. After he gets over the pains from his laughter, he posed one question to the class. What had the most influence on their behavior? He wanted to know if our actions, scattering about, was driven more by the plastic eggs that bounced off the floor or our perception that the carton was full of real eggs. For me, it was certainly the idea of getting egg on my face. While this is a simple example, it identifies a powerful tool that must be in your career strategy.

As discussed earlier, managers spend most of their time engaged in activities that keep them in the good graces of *their* managers; that is, all of those tasks they consider to be mission critical. Managers don't focus on the lower rungs of the ladder. Therefore, they lose touch with their own employees and become reliant upon others' perceptions to gauge the performance of those they manage. They judge perfor-

mance by reviewing the e-mails and meeting notices the employee forwarded to them and listening to the collective opinions of others. They often don't have enough face time to make a real assessment. Now, imagine being able to ensure that the people who influence the real decision-makers have the perceptions you want them to have. This is where the Blitz comes in. It is a way to manage others' perceptions of you with little effort on your part. It is what I call an *Active Perception Modification System* (APMS). The theory behind this system is that one can proactively and effectively manage their image within an organization by increasing the possibilities for persuasion (i.e., behavior modification) through perception management. It means that you don't just allow impressions of yourself to be made through the normal course of social interaction. By putting on the Blitz, you set the course for your career, and control the perceptions and communication about your performance to everyone.

Modifying perception isn't something new. It is a common everyday practice. Some people do it intentionally while others never even notice they are doing it. Yet, some may see it as a hobby or even take it as a job. Consider an artist preparing to paint a picture of an arrangement of beautiful flowers. They start out by studying them. Maybe they go to the store to buy some real flowers, or go to a museum to see how others have painted them to get ideas. They may see them in magazines, books, or pictures on the Internet. What they perceive from these experiences, looking at real flowers or other paintings, is influenced by their own personal interests. If they see colors that they like, they take a special interest in their detail. The more information they gather visually, the more knowledge they obtain about flowers. This knowledge will then train their eyes to draw out considerable details in what they see. As the eye learns to become meticulous, the artist becomes more adept at transferring the image from the mind to the canvas. These visions become the vibrant colors mixed together on their palette, their excitement transforms into the broad strong strokes upon the canvas, and their knowledge forms the textures that bring life and focus to the image. The result is a serene invitation to a whole new interpretation of our original concept and impression of the flower. In short, their perceptions of flowers develop their abilities to paint them. Their perceptions created the knowledge that trained their behaviors.

Now, imagine you are the artist and you want to paint a self-portrait that conveys the message that you are a high performer and deserve bigger projects, more responsibility, money, and so on. How do you do it? You first have to train the eyes (or those of the managers). If the managers don't know you, there should be no roadblocks or hurdles to overcome, because they will have no preconceived ideas of who you are. This should make it considerably easier. If they know you, they already have an impression that will need to be retrained. You should view this as a way to erase the flaws on the canvas of your self-portrait that you or others may have painted. Remember, the eyes train the brain first and are influenced by our interests. If your manager values self-direction and they haven't seen you demonstrate any, then most likely you won't be perceived positively. The comparison between what they like and what they see serves as valuable feedback, which will modify or reinforce their perception. This, in turn, supports or modifies their behavior, such as giving you a low performance rating. Don't worry too much over this. Seeing is not the only way we learn. We use all of our senses, giving us more tools, or brushes, to do our best work.

The Blitz is about creating new feedback to change old behaviors. This feedback will train a manager's eyes to see you the way you want them to see you. This is a powerful concept, because most leaders try to take advantage of feedback that comes from their employees, especially information that is unsolicited. While managers may not be effective at capturing a lot of information in a single glance, they can definitely find inspiration in the abundant displays of your abilities put forth by your team's use of the Blitz Approach. These numerous images will flood their mind and transform from a collage of portraits into a clear understanding of the message you seek to teach. Without this approach, others become the artist controlling the paint strokes that define your image. In the absence of significant feedback, managers will capture information from whatever resources they can find. This includes individuals that may have an obscure view of your likeness, resulting in a portrait with ill-defined attributes and lack of clarity in who you are. True or not, it will encompass all of the information the manager has about you, which will train their eyes to always see you that way. Therefore, it is to your advantage to establish a strong positive image of yourself that is communicated constantly to everyone, especially those in influential positions.

The purpose behind managing your perception is to build trust, credibility, and loyalty among those in the influential ranks. Your communicated image should maximize your strengths and minimize your weaknesses. It should identify you as one who remains confident and motivated in difficult situations where others may show fear. Management should see you as one who can reduce everyone's fear of failure and much more. Once these modifications are in place, you greatly reduce everyone's tendency to engage in selective perception; that is, decreasing your opportunities for the sake of their own wants, needs, desires, or attitudes. Through this communication process, you can systematically reinforce or shape behavior that will move your management closer to a more desired response. This process will also eliminate the reinforcement that maintains their existing behaviors, such as failing to provide you an opportunity to take on greater challenges, promotion, etc. This process is simple and can put some speed in your climb up the ladder.

This Blitz concept isn't revolutionary. Those in power use it all the time but not in such a formal manner. It will feel a little unnatural at first, because it is in conflict with an internal pull toward complete independence as a person. However, it will tap into another pull to become part of something larger, by allowing us to develop communion with others. The approach utilizes the advantages of synergy and cooperation to produce considerably more results with less effort as the team embarks upon the shared goal of climbing the ladder. If you have any hopes of improving or reducing the amount of time the climb takes, you must use an approach that is practical, expedient, beneficial, co-operative, and risk-averse.

The Blitz Approach

This approach consists of forming your own team of individuals committed to achieving a common goal. The size of the team is important and from my experience is most effective with only three members. Too many members will result in an inability to focus efforts on providing effective solutions to most situations and a plethora of group dynamics issues. Everyone will have an opinion, making it difficult to decide what course of action is best. It is important to note that these members are not restricted to your organization; you could choose peer-level or higher members from one of your company's sup-

pliers, contractors, or even competitors. Naturally, a member outside of your organization should have considerable influence on key members within your organization.

For example, consider David, who befriended a salesman from one of his company's suppliers. This salesman often communicated directly with David's CEO on many matters relating to a high profile project David was managing. The CEO was hoping to gain some advantage from the salesman as well. More importantly, he wanted a discount on some expensive equipment he wanted to purchase from that supplier. As a favor to David, the salesman would communicate that it was critical the CEO keep David in the lead position on this project. The salesman wanted to develop a strong relationship with David's company, so he agreed to help David. The salesman felt that if David was happy, then he would have a new "inside" connection. The CEO took the advice from the salesman (to gain favor with him), and David remained on the project as the project lead.

The goal of the Blitz will be to actively promote all members of the team until one reaches a position of authority. Once one member reaches an influential level, their efforts become directed towards elevating the other members of the team. This continues until all members have reached their goals. Each member of the team is committed not only to the goal of the team, but to those of each other member. As we'll discuss in later chapters, each member develops their career strategy map and shares it with the team, so that everyone knows each member's strategy. This information is not shared with anyone else and binds the members together in a mutual commitment. It serves to guide the team through the plethora of business situations that provide the potential for advancement.

Every situation is viewed as an opportunity to promote the skills and abilities of one of your team members. The team's strategy for achieving the common goal is generated through formal or informal meetings and is the result of group consensus. Your team will have a specific, defined purpose that each team member will contribute. One Blitz team I monitored, promoted a new business opportunity for its company. One team member served as the communication link to upper management in selling the plan to make another member the project lead of this new venture. The third member of the team functioned as the project planner and assisted with the development of

timelines, schedules, and financials required for the project plan. While promoting one of the members of the team to the lead, the other members worked diligently to prepare information that would prove they were definitely worthy of the opportunity. Convincing management that this particular team member was the one they wanted was much easier when they saw how prepared he already was. Once he was selected, he quickly provided a schedule, resource loading, and cost estimates. Naturally, they didn't know this had been done ahead of time—and they didn't need to know. The team sold the project to management and created an opportunity for success for their team.

Team communications and discussions will be open-ended, and problems will be solved using an active collaborative approach. Any issues among team members must be solved promptly, as small problems can greatly limit the team's effectiveness and ability to influence the network. Individual issues, such as a failure to perform assigned tasks, can make the difference between getting a new opportunity and not getting it. Just imagine if the team members previously mentioned failed to sell the project idea to upper management. It would have never happened. Now, consider the situation if the team did a poor job of preparing the project plan. Then, the project lead may look incompetent or incapable of handling the task. Therefore, communication between members of the team must be clear and concise. You'll meet with your team often, most likely on a weekly basis to discuss activities, opportunities, share ideas, new contacts, and strategy. Everyone must operate on the same page. Expectations must be shared and understood.

Lastly, the team works together. Everyone must pull their weight. Anyone who fails to perform becomes a threat to the effectiveness of the team. The team's plans will possess the needs and desires of all members; thus, everyone will have a vested interest in it and must act accordingly. The team must also gather and synthesize information, make decisions and engage in collective responsibility for achieving their goals. As the team gathers, mutual trust, respect, and care for each member builds, hopefully to the point that it becomes a natural reflex. Lastly, the cohesiveness of the team allows for the exercise of a more flexible decision making process that delegates authority to all team members in determining the best way to reach goals.

Now, when we mention the term “team,” we don't mean it in its truest definition. The team you create here is a combination between a working group and a team.²¹ A major distinction with the Blitz team is one characterized by team members who work for their own good (e.g., working group) but is also joined by a common commitment (e.g., team). Leadership roles will be shared, which is effective because each team member will possess unique skills that may be better suited for certain situations. The team possesses both individual and mutual accountability. Any wrong actions, such as committing a political faux pas or embarrassing a manager, can have serious consequences on the individual, as well as reduce the performance of the team. If one member becomes a liability to the organization, their influence is greatly limited and their impact on others minimized. The success of the team's influence is, essentially, the measure of its performance.

Challenging Aspects

In putting this team together, one of the largest challenges is finding and assembling a compatible team that possesses the appropriate expertise. Other difficulties will be keeping the competitive nature of each member at bay and understanding that another team member may be a more accepted fit for a particular desired position. It is also essential to ensure team members possess the drive, determination, and confidence to promote the abilities of the team until the goals are accomplished. Also, maintaining the direction and focus of the team can be quite challenging at times. Members will have a tendency to choose their own path, without regard for the development of the vision and strategy for the team. Lastly, members must come to the realization that if the team becomes effective, change will be a regular occurrence. Therefore, the team must be willing to support the guiding coalition but also consolidate the gains and produce more change. These are just a few of the possible issues that may arise. Others will be presented as we progress through team selection, goal setting, and implementation, as well as the remaining chapters.

21. Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith, *The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the High-Performance Organization* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1993).

The Blitz versus the Individual

While the Blitz Approach may seem simple, it provides some significant advantages that normal career progression may never offer: improved organizational vision, network connectivity, political awareness, problem solving, business skills, reputation, and support. By building a team of individuals who are prepared to sing your praises in front of other managers and leaders in the organization, you gain considerable reputation with minimal effort. To better see the impact of the Blitz, we will compare it to the individual method of career progression (IMCP) and some of the most common career mistakes.

Managing your boss. As mentioned in previous chapters, your immediate boss won't be able to aid you significantly in the great ladder challenge. However, if you have failed to manage the relationship with your boss, your reputation with management could be blown. Interpersonal conflicts can be hard to manage, and your manager may not have been trained to deal with them. My brother had a good analogy for the training that managers receive and it goes something like this:

If you want to be a doctor, go to medical school. If you want to be a teacher, get certified. If you want to be a manager, just click the SEND button to forward your resume.

This saying wasn't intended to be harmful but only to highlight that there are no standard credentials required to become a manager, creating the opportunity for unqualified individuals to fill these roles. While this doesn't happen very often, it does happen.

Consider the case of the bad boss. If your personalities clash, your reputation could be damaged, simply because you have difficulty working together. Your reputation in the company is important and should be protected. With IMCP, you will have a difficult time convincing others that you are really good at what you do. Others may perceive this conflict as a manager's word against his subordinate. Unless this manager has a bad reputation himself, your career mobility could be reduced. You'll spend much of your energy managing the relationship with your boss rather than finding ways to improve your career mobility. Instead of dealing with issues like this alone, you could be utilizing your team to communicate your skills to many others and provide that ev-

er-so-critical positive external influence on everyone's perception. If many others are singing your praises, a single contradictory voice can get drowned out easily.

Hanging with the wrong crowd. As you should already know, we are often judged by the company we keep. If you often socialize with a particular group with similar personality types, it is likely that you will be judged to be one as well. Remember, management doesn't really know what you do, so they can only speculate what you are like from what they see. IMCP would dictate that you would be forced to overcome these perceptions through individual interactions with management. You would need to work with your managers enough to convince them you aren't like the others. However, the Blitz Approach bypasses this through constant communication that you're a superstar to management and the central character within the organization. Not to mention, your team, if chosen correctly, will be high performers and high achievers. Management will most likely have a good impression of them—an impression they will easily transfer to you.

Ego-centric. Managers and peers typically don't appreciate employees that focus on themselves. If you get attached to a reputation as a whiner or complainer, it is almost impossible to overcome quickly. Managers have a fairly long memory, too. A manager once told me of a discussion he had with his Chief Operating Officer (COO) that demonstrates the presence of long memories in management. The manager had finished his MBA some time ago and felt he had demonstrated sufficient performance improvement to warrant an increase in salary. The COO reminded him that he asked for more money two years ago, when he graduated, and his response hasn't changed. These instances don't echo the attributes of the “company” man. Managers like employees who focus on getting the job done and furthering the interests of the company, not themselves. A reputation like this is hard to shake with the IMCP. With the Blitz, you can concentrate on building the “company” man image, while your team works on getting those other benefits for you.

Complacency. Have you ever wanted to achieve a certain level of success at something but didn't want to put forth the required effort? It's not enough to just serve your time in an organization anymore. You have to be an active participant. You must learn to recognize your inefficiencies and weaknesses to improve them. It's important to build an

ability to see the big picture and determine the skills needed to be successful in the future, not just today. Years ago, I began reading career advice books to get an idea of where my skills were weak and how I should go about improving them. The ones I chose to improve were the ones I thought management wanted. Unfortunately, I couldn't determine when I was actually improving my skills. I didn't have a reference point or anything to compare my new level of skill. My old level was gone. With my Blitz team, each member provides an unbiased assessment of strengths and weaknesses. They also provide methods, as well as support and motivation, for improvement. For most of us, that's a difficult task to do alone.

Procrastination. There's nothing like putting off preparing that presentation until tomorrow. Then, we rush to put all of the information together, hoping we cover what's really needed, only to find out that we miss the mark and waste the manager's time. And so goes another opportunity to make a good impression. Unfortunately, we didn't miss the opportunity to make a bad one. If you're a procrastinator, the IMCP would leave it up to you to kick the habit. But as part of a Blitz team, you're pushed by others to do it right the first time. Maybe, your team helps you prepare the presentation by ensuring the content is useful and informative. They help you practice your delivery, so that it appears smooth and unrehearsed. Do this a few times, and your skills, as well as your reputation, begin to shine through.

Settling into the job description. Too many times, we get tired of the career struggle and settle down into doing only what our job description says we should do. If you spend too much time here, it's almost impossible to dig your way out. Managers will only see a lack of drive and initiative, and an unwillingness to go the extra mile for the company. However, put on the Blitz, and you become acutely aware of opportunities. Then, you can maneuver yourself to take full advantage of them. Your team can tap into the informal networks and keep you up to date on openings around the organization. I once had a manager schedule weekly meetings with me just to find out what was going on in the company. My resources provided me information much faster than his. So, often I knew about job openings before he did. Multiply this power by the number of members you have in your team, and your opportunities can grow by leaps and bounds.

The Blitz helps you do your job. Each team member is a resource for you to accomplish your work through their abilities and their network of employees and contacts. The team also is there to promote your successes and ensure that you get that pat on the back for a job well done. If you choose your members from various areas around the company, you gain insight into how the company really operates—such as how employees are ranked, promoted, and awarded. If you choose members from outside the organization, you gain great insight into how it is to deal with the upper echelon of your company. Then, you possess an avenue for improving customer relations and service. Another big benefit is getting the opportunity to take on some of management's more difficult problems. Upper management doesn't necessarily run around asking for support from the general population on important issues but, if you have a team member on the inside, they can get you in on some of those projects. For example, you can use your team to develop the reputation of being a problem-solver. Try that all by yourself, and it can take many years to become known as the answer man.

Handling office politics. There's nothing so damaging to a career as committing a big political faux pas. Embarrass a manager in the wrong situation, and it could be a long time before you get over the third degree burns. Office politics are unavoidable. Almost every organization has its unofficial power structure. If you don't know what it is, you can't take advantage of it. If there are strong office politics, an inability to defend yourself could be the death of your career. Don't go into battle outnumbered. Build your Blitz team and generate all the support you need to effectively build stronger working relationships, get help, and create interest in yourself from others.

Failing to network. It's not important that you stay on top of the events happening in your career field—that is, if you already know individuals who do. The informal networks in an organization are critical to its health. These networks basically run the business. If you don't know the centrality of the advice network, you may spend too much time trying to find answers to your questions. Significant efficiency and effectiveness can be gained from knowing key members of the advice, communication, and trust networks in your company. These individuals help you accomplish work much faster than you could yourself. They also provide valuable insight to the workings of the company that you

wouldn't find on your own. Building a Blitz team rapidly builds your network—almost instantly—by providing access to those who would normally take you years to find, if you were to do it alone.

The Blitz will help you develop skills in working with people. Maybe, you get a project in an area totally unrelated to your daily activities, which will give you the benefit in learning how other departments and professions function. Through these interactions, you can access the informal networks to learn who the important players are in each department. The Blitz also gives you the chance to make new connections in your network. Every activity and situation allows you to build your team's network. Of course, each of your team members is gaining these same benefits at the same time as you. As the team begins to achieve goals and gain authority, you will start taking charge of the direction of your career by selecting the most interesting projects to work on, developing the necessary skills needed for the desired, higher-level position, and demonstrating to upper-level managers that you're prepared for the next move. While the Blitz Approach appears to be quite simple on the surface, it is far more complicated than flying solo towards your career dreams. Fortunately, the rewards are greater and come at a faster pace.

Setting goals. It's hard to get there when you don't know where “there” is. You have to be able to define your own personal goals that are achievable within your organization. For many, defining goals is troublesome. Then, determining if they are obtainable in your company is even more complex. A financial advisor once told me that an individual IRA would provide me all of the financial freedom I needed to obtain my goals, because I would have control over where my money went. But I wasn't looking for the freedom; I needed to know *where* to put my money. My goals were identified, they just needed some direction. If you Blitz, you have the opportunity to create effective short- and long-term goals by utilizing a realistic perspective provided by all of your team members. By reviewing your goals with your team, you could save considerable time and disappointment through a better definition of the career path or direction you want. Using the IMCP, your method gets reduced to trial and error. Setting well-defined goals provides you direction. Setting realistic goals provides opportunity.

While there is no career strategy that is fully guaranteed to get you to the top, the Blitz Approach greatly increases your odds by helping you overcome many of those situations that limit upward mobility. The Blitz team will support your efforts in managing the perceptions that can make or break a career. Building a good reputation can take some time to accomplish, but becomes much easier if you have high achievers promoting your abilities. The team you build will aid you in developing goals and strategy, defining activities to reach them, and most importantly, doing the work it takes to get there. Not only do you share the work, your team's efforts will ensure each member avoids the normal career pitfalls others usually experience. The IMCP will place an enormous workload on you with little support in recovering from mistakes. In some corporate environments, once you make a mistake, you're pretty much done. However, using the expertise and abilities of a Blitz team, you'll be less likely to make such fatal mistakes. Once you experience this success, you'll be motivated to elevate your game to the next level and position yourself to take advantage of the opportunities your network provides or the ones your team creates.

4 Tapping the Power of Perception

At the heart of the Blitz Approach is a simple system. The Active Perception Modification System (APMS) is designed to overcome individual flaws in impression formation and self-presentation in a controlled manner. It will utilize your vision of who you want to be, the efforts of your team, and methods for influencing others. In every situation, we present information about ourselves. It either reinforces what people already think, conflicts with it, or establishes a new impression. Most of us react instinctively by trying to relax and just be who we are. However, put us in front of the company's decision-makers and we may have difficulty providing the right impression. If we get very little exposure, a bad impression during a rare opportunity will ensure minimal exposure as well. In order to move up in an organization, it is important to overcome a bad reputation, improve a mediocre one, or establish a new, impressive one. However, trying to assess other people's opinions by yourself will present some overwhelming challenges. Most people don't like confrontation and will steer away from hurting your feelings. So, you'll end up with a misguided image of yourself. There are several resources you need to utilize in this approach, and several techniques to use them effectively.

Painting the Masterpiece of You

The vision of yourself is greatly influenced by two things: you and everyone else. Regardless of management's impression of you or your ability to present yourself in the best light, you can't maximize the benefits of either one without a clear picture of what people see (i.e., meta-perceptions) and what you want people to see (i.e., self-presentation). Understanding how others see us is extremely critical if we are to authenticate the work and personal connections and gain satisfaction from them. Your ability to make perception changes and drive others to see what you want them to see is improved if you exhibit a couple of rather persuasive characteristics. The effectiveness of such changes is usually called credibility, or believability, which is strongly based on expertise and trustworthiness. Once others see you in this light, you will begin to see yourself the same way.

A View from the Outside

When we try to figure out how other people see us, we don't have perfect vision. We use a pair of virtual glasses our mother made for us. For most of us, mama was the first person we interacted with. When I was a baby, mama always nurtured me and took care of my needs. Every time I cried, she responded. Therefore, my initial impression of myself was that I was important and loved. As I grew older, this relationship continued to be reinforced, not only by mama but dad and my brothers. Then, after sufficient time, my self-concept was firmly developed. I had a pretty good idea how people saw me. In later years, my experience with coworkers, friends, etc. began to influence how I saw myself and, subsequently, how I thought they saw me. Most of the time, I thought I was an okay person and that people liked me. I was happy with who I was, and others seemed to be happy with who I was, so I must have been right. Thinking that my peers liked me, I behaved in ways that would make them continue to like me. Naturally, if I felt others disliked me, I most certainly would have acted in ways that would have made them not like me. But this isn't where the complication comes in. If I'm confident that others like me, I'll have a decreased ability to detect those that don't, and vice versa. It is really difficult to know specifically what people see when they look at you. Additionally, any self-assess-

ment will be biased by your own self-concept. As I learned as a child, people like me, so I assume they will always like me. I probably wouldn't allow the results to indicate otherwise.

In trying to see how others see you, it should be understood that you will only be able to establish a general understanding. It would be impossible for you to pick out a particular manager and gain any insight into how he sees you. He most likely wouldn't tell you if he didn't like you. This is a major drawback in trying to climb the corporate ladder alone. A general view of others' perceptions won't provide sufficient information to influence the individuals who may be able to advance your career. You need specific viewpoints from specific individuals. You may not get this kind of information by asking people directly. Some managers won't tell you why they don't like you or what shortcomings you may have. However, using a team-based approach, you can solicit feedback on your perceived characteristics from those you desire.

Using your own team, you can carefully question a selected few for their impression of you. Your team members can seek out opportunities to engage in conversation to gain a sense of how these selected individuals perceive you. Managers and others will be more likely to talk about you to your team members than they would directly to you. Be creative in finding topics for discussion that will engage your target individual and get them talking. Also, consider the time of day when you seek out these discussions. It is best to engage in such discussions early in the morning or late in the day. During these times, the mind is not fully active, which will lead to a more open-minded conversation. Other times, people are less guarded when they are physically exhausted, feel hot and uncomfortable, and overexerted. As you might imagine, all of these situations may not be at work, so you'll need to keep the team alert for opportunities to hold these discussions.

Inside Looking Out

In establishing the vision of yourself you'd like others to see, it's difficult to tell exactly what it should look like. Much of this vision will be based upon what others already see. However, to get the most "persuasive power" from your image, you should ensure others see three important parameters: technical expertise, trustworthiness, and professionalism. Claiming the title "expert" in any particular aspect of your job, group,

company, etc. works to generate a following. People will tend to believe in you if they see you as being respected by others for your knowledge and skills. Having answers that helps others also builds an allegiance to you. Lastly and most importantly, if you're regarded as the expert, people will have a tendency to believe in you and take your suggestions as truth. Consider situations such as going to the doctor or a cross examination of an expert witness in a courtroom. Do you question their prognosis or testimony? Of course, you don't. In their respective fields, they are considered experts, and we consider them the same way. These individuals are very knowledgeable in their areas of expertise, or at least our perception is that they are, so much so that we hardly ever question it. The perception we hold of their knowledge almost forces us to accept their opinion. Experts, without a doubt, are persuasive.

Trust is another powerful tool in persuading others to see things your way. It should also take little effort to obtain. Trust is, in a sense, a moral question. It has a learned and perceived component. The learned part is the development of expectancy from others who feel your behavior will be beneficial to them. As you may already know, perception plays a critical role in all that you do. If others perceive your actions to be selfish and self-centered, trust may not ever develop. One of the benefits in having a team of individuals that trust and support you is that it influences others to see you the same way. As others begin to build high trust for you, they also build confidence in you and your abilities. Contrarily, as trust in you declines, others begin to feel a sense of alienation. A trusted individual is often seen as one with a low need for controlling others, which just happens to be highly influential.

Creating a vision using characteristics that make you a person everyone needs and identifies you as concerned about others is a great way to get people to want to connect with you. These characteristics can easily be recognized both inside and outside of your company, and stand to build you a great reputation. Your vision, if communicated effectively, will accomplish a lot of work for you. It can create your own personal branding, professional image, and reputation. All of which have a tendency to improve career success. However, you must work to manage this vision. If you don't manage it, others will.

Team Member Efforts

Communicating your vision throughout your organization can take a lot of time, especially if you pursue this goal alone. However, using the efforts of the team, you can blanket the organization with the image of you. The Blitz team can help you overturn bad impressions, remove barriers to your career development, and communicate those important characteristics that every manager should know you possess. You can do these things yourself, but you won't get the impact that a Blitz team can bring. A Blitz team can impress upon management an image of an employee that is likable, familiar, and similar. They will also make efforts to transform bad perceptions or habits that may be holding you back. Lastly, your Blitz team will always serve as a monitoring system to the perceptions being created.

The Likeability Factor

Every congressman understands the power of the likeability factor. In most cases, it's how they get elected. If they are really liked by their constituents, they stand a good chance of winning an election or re-election. In many cases, we don't even know the candidates at all. The only information we have most likely comes from the media, such as radio interviews or endorsements and political debates on television. From such little information, we develop a perception about this person's personality. If we don't like them, we don't vote for them. However, if we do like them, they can easily gain our support. It's not much different in the workplace. Just like politicians, there are a few factors that can aid in building your likeability, and these factors should be an integral element of your team's plan.

True likeability can take some time to build alone, especially with those in power who don't have much interaction with you. Your team should be used to promote your likeability among managers and hubs of the company's informal networks. The techniques you use to improve your likeability should be developed to create a new way of working, and not treated as a short-term activity. Likeability is not sufficient by itself but, with all things being equal, it can put the advantage in your court. Regardless of how likable you are, your team will need to communicate it upwards.

Promoting Familiarity

To create such an environment, your team should communicate and promote your familiarity. Typically, the more familiar you are with a situation, the more confident you become. Increased confidence gives rise to a more comfortable and pleasurable interaction. As many people make the transition into management, they begin to notice that those below them (structurally speaking) don't take much pleasure in speaking with upper management. Much of this is related to the highly infrequent opportunities to interact with them. Therefore, they always feel uncomfortable around management.

Managers, as well as others, typically like to work with people that are similar in beliefs, interests, mind-set, communication style, and so on. This is due to the fact that less time has to be spent on learning about the differences and more time can be spent on working. Personal differences can be a big cause of conflict, misunderstanding, miscommunication, and numerous other problems. Working with others that are just like us has an amazing effect. Being around similar people can make us more trusting, open to ideas, and willing to be helpful. These are all attributes you would certainly like managers to have whenever they are around you. These attributes also contribute to a positive environment where most people will let down their guard and communicate more freely. Therefore, it is essential that your team create a sense of familiarity among managers and key figures in the company. They must communicate the characteristics about you that management may like. Just imagine yourself as a high-performing sales executive and one of the best in the business-to-business environment. You're on the verge of making a big sale to a big customer. Your discussions with the customer are to the point of verifying commitment. However, knowing you are the best sales executive out there, your arrogance begins to take over and you fail to make sure the customer knows they can't find the value you bring to them anywhere else in the world. Your arrogance alone is interpreted as an overstated value proposition that leaves the customer to think they aren't getting the most for the money. How likely are you to get commitment? Did you create a positive environment that allows people to feel comfortable enough to let their guard down? It can be this simple. If you demonstrate characteristics that others don't relate to, you're increasing your obstacles to success.

Redefining Similarity

Finding similarities between you and others, whom you may not know well, may seem difficult to do. However, there are two key elements that aid in simplifying the goal of improving your influence or likeability with certain people, despite what you know about them. The first element is the most visible social trait, which is the one managers are likely to perceive first and most often. For example, agreeableness is one such trait. You can imagine why managers would notice and appreciate this one. Many of us identify individuals with an exceptional level of agreeableness as a “yes” man. It doesn't take many social interactions to see this. When managers identify an interesting trait in an individual, they will immediately compare the perceived level of this visible trait to their own. If the level is above theirs, then it will be perceived in a positive sense. If the level is below theirs, the individual may not be looked upon so favorably.

The second important element is a little tougher to grasp. The perception of a particular trait is more important than the actual level of the trait. In many organizations, managers don't get close to their subordinates; therefore, they never really know what traits any particular employee truly possesses. After all, how many of your managers engage in social activities with you outside of work? Probably, not too many. By intentionally creating a social barrier between themselves and their employees, managers train themselves to function on perceptions. They have to evaluate an individual's personality and performance on the little information they receive from others or what they actually perceive themselves. The good news for you is that you don't have to totally subscribe to any of the management-defined “must have” traits—you simply need to create the perception that you have them.

Keith Folken, senior engineer with Caterpillar, Inc., shared a simple story with me, describing the situation that deemed him one of the most organized people in his company. It happened during an all-day meeting, where the customer visited his facility to review the progress on their projects. He was already taking notes, as the meeting had already begun, when his manager came into the conference room. Quietly, his manager sat down beside him. The manager would nonchalantly glance over at him as he was taking notes. As each project was reviewed, he would turn to each appropriate section in his

notebook, which was marked with tabs that identified each project. E-mails were printed out and pasted on various pages. The manager saw that this notebook contained an overwhelming amount of detail on each project and was very impressed by the employee's organization. It didn't take long for the word to get around. Before he knew it, he was always invited to take part in any situation or project that required a high level of detail management or organization. He learned that even the simplest of situations can have a significant impact on how you are perceived in the company. These perceptions can help set the course of your career.

Your Blitz team holds the responsibility to help create a positive perception of you within your company. This is not suggesting that you or your team try to convince others of qualities you do not possess. The purpose is to draw similarities between your qualities and the characteristics that are deemed essential for promotion within your organization. Your Blitz team communicates these similarities in an effort to increase others' familiarity with you. By maintaining a focus on your likeability, similarity, and familiarity, your team reduces the amount of time it takes others to become at ease around you. Remember, elevating yourself in the eyes of others using your own words can come off as arrogance, but having others promote you will carry your career much further.

Overcoming Bad Impressions

Most of us try to manage our good and bad impressions. If you're trying to do this, remember that everything you do will have some impact on the impressions others hold of you. Your impression management strategy is your attempt to control the images you project in either real or imagined social situations. If you focus on making good impressions, your approach is considered to be assertive. In this case, you may be trying to create favorable perceptions of identity and image. Self-promotion is a good example of assertive impression management. Others include ingratiation and favor-doing. If you have a few bad habits, you may find yourself making excuses, providing justifications, or handing out apologies to reduce the negative perceptions. This is a defensive implementation of impression management. As you might imagine, the defensive approach doesn't provide a great deal of support in improvement of others' perception of you, because it may

imply you suffer from low self-esteem. You definitely do not want to spend a lot of your time making excuses and apologizing. After a while, this behavior will eventually define your image. Possessing the skill to make good impressions is powerful, but the ability to overcome your flaws and missteps is a tool that everyone who plans to climb the ladder must have. Your career will unfold over many years, and to think you won't ever make a mistake is just plain silly. As we progress, we'll look at some effective ways to perform impression management, including stigma management.

Impression management is typically accomplished by primarily emphasizing your positive characteristics. It is a goal-directed activity of controlling information to influence the impressions formed by those around you. People don't just deal with information randomly or dispassionately. Opinions about what we consider to be "truth" are greatly influenced by our personal agendas. With this understanding, we carefully package information in ways to help our audience draw the correct conclusion about us. Now, while this packaging is not intended to be deceptive or immoral, although it certainly can be used for illicit ends. In order to communicate effectively and avoid any misunderstanding, we must be able to assess how any particular audience will respond, and adjust our presentation accordingly. We must fit the presentation to the beliefs, values, and competencies of the audience, so they will draw the proper conclusion. The audiences you target in the workplace are usually coworkers, managers, subordinates, and even customers. For instance, consider how a textbook author would carefully select the information that goes into each chapter of the book to convey the desired message to the student without overwhelming them. Impression management involves three phases: monitoring, motivation, and construction.

Impression Monitoring

As a first step to impression management, it is useful to engage in the process of monitoring or generating an awareness of how others perceive you. As we interact with others, we often look for clues that help us understand what they think of us. For the most part, we either pay close attention to these clues (i.e., high self-monitoring) or ignore them (i.e., low self-monitoring). Identification of these clues, such as facial expressions and body language, can play a significant role in our career mobility. Research has shown that high level of self-monitoring

is more likely to result in cross-company promotions, job changes, and relocation.²² Those who self-monitor are very concerned with the image they set forth; they often adjust their “selves” to fit the social situation. They are sensitive to the social cues and self-presentations of others, and use these social cues as guidelines for managing their own social behavior and creating desirable impressions.²³ You might consider these individuals as good “actors.” They don’t reveal too much about themselves, only enough to maximize the benefit of the situation. On the other hand, the low self-monitors pay less attention to the behavioral cues of others and tend to monitor and control their behavior to a lesser extent. They reveal everything about themselves. In this way, they can just be themselves in the presence of others. Low self-monitors don’t allow the requirements of a situation to change their behavior, no matter how incongruent their self-expression may be.

Being able to accurately read the emotions and responses of others is no easy task. Learning such social skills is necessary to meet and befriend employees all across the organization, regardless of whether they are similar to you. If you choose not to change with respect to the social situations, you can greatly limit the size of your network; and the smaller your network, the less influence you may have. Also, having less exposure to the company’s informal networks can make it difficult for you to ascertain annoyance, anxiety, anger, avoidance, interference, and threat. This could result in negative interactions, where you may have a tendency to become a target yourself for purposeful harmful actions by others, or even worse, reciprocation.

In forming impressions, we focus on five factors: appearance, verbal behavior, actions, non-verbal messages, and situations. These are all the normal things with which you should have familiarity. If not, there are numerous books that can aid you in improving these factors for yourself. However, the most useful method to assess these factors is to watch and evaluate the group you wish to be part of or seek to emulate. As for monitoring the impressions you make, keep a written log of your progress, relative to each factor. Then, improve them.

22. Kilduff Martin and David Day, *Do Chameleons Get Ahead? The Effects of Self-Monitoring on Managerial Careers*, Academy of Management Journal, 1994, Vol. 37, No. 4, 1047-1050.

23. Mark Snyder, *Public Appearances/Private Realities* (New York: Freeman and Company, 1987).

However, don't rely on your own abilities to accurately evaluate what others perceive. This is usually best defined by others. Using the Blitz Approach provides a considerable advantage in monitoring impressions, in that you can utilize your team for two major activities: testing and forming. The testing activity is used to initially evaluate how you will be perceived by assessing your situational response, presentation, language, etc. on your team prior to the concerned individuals.

Consider David's situation. David was an engineer, interviewing for a management position within his company. He set up mock interviews with his Blitz team prior to the interview. The first mock interview was his best guess at what they would want to see and hear. His team monitored his voice, tone, actions, and the information provided. They reviewed their interpretation of all of these factors with him. The second interview incorporated the team's suggestions from the first interview. These mock interviews allowed David to identify and correct his flaws and remove some of his nervousness by giving him confidence in how he was being interpreted.

After testing your impressions, your team will be critical for understanding how well you form your impressions. Your team will provide you insight to where your impressions actually are and how you need to change (before you do any serious damage to your career mobility). After David finished his interview, his team members quietly and carefully probed those who interviewed him for their thoughts on how he performed. If you and your team members aren't viewed as "tied to the hip," others may see their interest in your performance as genuine. In short, it won't be obvious that your team members are seeking input to help you. Managers may think your team members are simply interested in knowing more about you, so they can develop their own opinions of you. Your Blitz team will probe managers, key "networkers," experts, and highly influential employees for the many opinions of you. You'll then work with your team to improve on these. These opinions, or impressions, will help build a basis for your image. You and your team will work to build the perfect image that gets your career moving.

Impression Motivation

In making impressions, the amount of energy we put into making the right one is related to how much we think the impression will contribute to achieving our goal, the value of the goal, and the difference between

the impression we want to make and the one the individual holds. The goals we often seek are related to likeability, competence, worthiness, and intimidation (or danger). These shouldn't be a surprise. Think back to your first job fresh out of school. You sought to prove you were competent and knowledgeable. Your efforts focused on doing the best job you could do, with the goal of showing you could accomplish your tasks better than anyone else. These efforts, over time, would prove your worthiness and reinforce the decision by management to hire you. At the same time, you didn't want to make waves and sought to feel safe and comfortable in your position. Feeling like an integral part of the company or team was important. If the other employees liked you, your acceptance was almost guaranteed. Then, you could relax a little and be yourself.

In your first job, you were considerably motivated to make the appropriate impressions upon others. The goal of proving yourself had great value to you. After all, it was your first chance to show the world who you were. You really didn't know what impression everyone had, but you definitely knew what impression you wanted them to have. All of this gave you sufficient energy and drive to face this challenge day after day until it was accomplished. This is the kind of motivation you'll need to create the impressions in managers that will help you continue to climb the corporate ladder. The advantage you have now is that you have a team willing to help create and sustain these impressions.

However, be aware that as you determine how the influential figures in your organization perceive you, you may find this image to be somewhat different than how you perceive it, and even further away from your ideal image. This discrepancy has a tendency to provoke feelings of disappointment, anger, and depression. It may feel like your team members are attacking you when they provide feedback. However, you must remember they are there to help you overcome any negative habits or bad impressions you may have. Also, you can't show any negativity towards those who hold a bad impression of you. Attitudes can affect how others see you. If you allow anger to build up, because you don't like how others see you, your emotions will convince others to see you as one with a bad attitude. They won't understand your situation but they will respond to your attitude. You could run this risk of being deemed a troublemaker or one who doesn't get along well with others. In either case, it can have serious consequences on your career and even your team members. Understanding how others

perceive you can create a lot of emotion. These emotions can drive your attitude. You should use your attitude to lead others in viewing you in a more positive light. When you properly motivate others, you can shift their attitudes to create the desired impression.

Impression Construction

By far, the most difficult aspect of impression management is constructing the perceptions necessary to achieve your career success. Impression construction relates to how you modify your behavior to create the impression you want. This part involves two components: defining what you want others to see and figuring out how you will make these impressions. After you and the team have studied how others see you, identification of the impressions you need to make or change should be easy. Defining the methods to build your image may be pretty tough. However, there are some general guidelines that may be useful.

If your intention is to make managers like you more, consider *ingratiation*. This approach requires different techniques, depending on where the manager is on the corporate ladder. If the manager is only a rung above you, the most potent techniques are flattery, agreeing with his or her opinion, and doing favors. If the manager is many rungs above you, paying compliments is by far the most effective strategy for getting him or her to like you. It's important to note that conforming to a high-status person's point of view won't win you popularity points, but it may help you get a raise. To become efficient with using ingratiation, take the time to learn the best technique for each manager. Write down what works and what doesn't. Then, share your results with your team members so that the overall team effectiveness improves.

In making yourself appear more competent and knowledgeable, you'll need to exercise self-promotion behaviors. Essentially, it is a case of letting the bigger decision-makers know about your skills and talents. It shouldn't be an attempt to make yourself something you aren't. Your techniques should communicate your capability, pride, confidence, and conviction to be the best you can be. Self-promotion is a way to make sure these things are evident in your work. Some techniques you may want to use are publishing, doing more than expected, showcase your talents without being overbearing, make good first impressions, and invest in your overall well-being by getting rid of bad habits. As you may

expect, your Blitz team can help your cause effectively and quickly. They can help you research and develop ideas for publishing, boast your technical skills throughout the organization, build up your presentation skills through practice so you always put on a great show, and expand your knowledge base by teaching you some of their job skills, such as accounting, contracts or sales. Remember, an expert is only an expert if others believe him to be. You want management to need the expertise that you possess, and the best way to convince them of it is through the recommendations of others. Did you ever go see a movie because your friends told you it was great? This is the behavior your Blitz team will seek to create. Managers will hear so much good about you that they will have to find out who you are.

Have you ever worked around someone who always appears busy every time the boss comes around? You know they don't really do that much work. They are just trying to impress the boss. Maybe, you've been in meetings with those people who always talk about doing the right thing. These are the people who are always morally erect in front of others; however, due to other things they do, you may be inclined to question their integrity. Well, pretending to be busy all the time or impeccably moral may seem a little false but they aren't necessarily a bad thing. These people are practicing a technique called *exemplification*. They are trying to be seen as one who embodies the ideal of being morally responsible or committed to the cause. A word of caution regarding this technique: too much of it runs the risk of hypocrisy and self-righteousness.

So, let's now apply the Blitz to these situations. If your team members communicate to others that you are always busy and working hard or maybe that you always try to do the right thing, those void of direct interaction with you may simply adopt this impression. While you may not have big star power on your team, such as having Oprah Winfrey speak on your behalf at a presidential campaign rally, the people on your team will still influence what people think of you. The power of the influence by your team is a function of their credibility, which is mostly based on expertness and trustworthiness. If the individuals being influenced perceive them to be trustworthy or an expert on the factor being promoted, it is more likely they will assume the impression. Otherwise, it may do little to change their thoughts.

Another situation often experienced in organizations is one in which higher-level managers try to create the proper appreciation for their position and expertise by a technique called *intimidation*. Managers intimate to quickly establish the desired atmosphere in their situations. Most everyone has seen a manager flex their authority when things aren't going the way they want. It is a good idea to examine the situation and how the manager responds, so that you can determine what their "hot" buttons are. Intimidation is a technique you would want to use sparingly.

Many times talent can easily identify other talent. In a meeting among two companies, a serious debate was anticipated in finding resolution to a contractual dispute. An executive VP from one of the companies demonstrated his strategy within five minutes of entering the conference room. He walked into the room wearing an expensive looking pin striped suit, gold watch, and leather briefcase. He sat down at the table, pulled out a notepad and an expensive pen and sat them neatly in front of him. He turns to everyone and, with a rather condescending tone, introduces himself. He not only makes note that he is the executive VP, but that he is also an attorney. He mentions that he has taken the time to fully understand the legal intricacies of the situation and is well aware of his company's options. His use of intimidation was performed before anyone else in the room had an opportunity to speak. This course of action was designed to strike fear in the hearts of those from the other company and reduce any resistance to his claims. This example is not suggesting you should exercise this technique in all situations; care should be taken when using intimidation, in that it can easily be perceived as confrontational. This example was used to illustrate that a number of means for obtaining the desired impression can be used, such as physical appearance, verbal comments, nonverbal behavior and styles, material possessions, and social association. This may not be a technique you use often, but it will definitely be one you will see in the workplace.

Creating an impression consists of both determining the kind of impression to portray and then deciding how to go about it. The approaches presented here should be helpful. It should be noted that monitoring and controlling how you are perceived does not mean you are trying to be deceitful. It merely suggests that you are making an attempt to ensure that others have an accurate perception of you. All of these are powerful tools help to create the image you want. It does take planning

to understand what method works best in a particular situation or with certain individuals. For those, Blitz team members can provide valuable insight for the best way to create your impression. Your team is critical because it becomes somewhat difficult to repair the wrong impression, especially if you have to do the repairs. Changing behaviors around the same individuals can draw out their curiosity for the genuineness of your actions. Once this gets drawn into question, scrutinization of your behavior becomes much more popular. Then, creating that golden perception gets to be seriously complicated—and without a team of supporters—almost impossible.

Mental Strategies

So we've decided what impression to make and how to make it. Now, the only thing to figure out is when to make it. Finding the right time to influence others is not as difficult as you might think. Let's look at a few situations you can use in making that perfect impression.

Some very important times that you can more easily persuade others is when their minds are at the extreme ends of mental activity; that is, very busy or just plain exhausted. One instance of mental exhaustion occurs when they are physically exhausted. I know what you're thinking, how often does that happen at work? Consider when managers go on business trips and return on a work day. They come back to the office to catch up on e-mail, phone messages, or attend meetings. Wait until the end of the day to practice your technique. Exhaustion lowers their "mental guard." Maybe your managers exercise at lunch, such as biking, jogging, or some other form of exercise. Catch them right after they finish. You only need a few minutes to plant the seeds that make them see you as a vital part of the organization. Make sure your team utilizes these times.

High mental activity periods are also great for persuading managers. A couple of these times to consider are when they are in a strange environment and when they are excited. Now consider being on a business trip with a manager in a city he hasn't visited before. You're out at night, searching for the restaurant where you are to meet your customer, and you're late. His mind is racing more than usual and won't have time to evaluate everything you say. He'll be too preoccupied with trying to understand his surroundings to consider your comments in great detail.

Make sure your message is the last thing you leave in his mind. It may not spark a lot of discussion, but it will leave a mark that will be analyzed later. Then, when he does think on it, he'll only have limited information to process it. He'll only have the suggestions you gave him. What a great way to create an opportunity. Another great time for persuading your managers is right after events that generate joy and happiness, such as winning a new customer, getting a promotion, or successfully completing a big project. These times of joy and excitement promote a good feeling inside, making generosity much easier to engage in. Have your plan in your head all the time. Then, you can take advantage of times when things are going their way, so you can get things going your way.

The Active Perception Modification System is designed to help you reduce the time and energy in making that perfect impression by using your Blitz team. Your team will help you understand how others view you. Then, they'll make you appear likeable, familiar, and similar to others. Managing your impression becomes much simpler, because the Blitz team monitors others' perceptions to ensure your image is on the right path. If not, everyone works to construct a better one and then implements it. The Blitz team gives you additional eyes and ears all over the organization. By chasing the ladder alone, you would have to get very creative to effectively manage your image after you've made a few mistakes and damaged your reputation. By actively constructing and monitoring your image using support from others, being seen as the right person for advancement becomes much easier. Remember, reality and people's perception of reality are two different things. Influence the perception, and you influence the reality.

5

The Ten Blitz Principles

Putting together a team that wants to accomplish great things is easy. Putting together a team that accomplishes great things is not. With the right attitude, teams can meet their goals, even in the face of adversity, such as inadequate resources, lack of management support, competition, and environmental resistance. When your team is firing on all four cylinders, you can expect to see improvements in quality, productivity, and efficiency. An equally difficult task is keeping it together. In this chapter, we'll discuss the ten basic principles for a Blitz team. Each principle plays a vital role in the successful operation of the team. Losing any one of these can be the difference between standing on the sideline and playing in the game of your life. Read through these principles. Print them out and post them where your team can view them.

Principle 01 - Career Self-Reliance

Career self-reliance is measured by a person's capacity for career management, keen judgment, and strategy implementation. The question all team members must be able to answer with a resounding YES is, "Can you

manage your own career?" This is, actually, what the Blitz Approach is all about. As the great Ralph Waldo Emerson formulated in his 1821 essay, *Self-Reliance*, "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." True though that may be, it doesn't necessarily mean the reverse is true: inconsistency is not in and of itself an indication of intellectual greatness.

The major barriers to self-reliance consist of the **3 C's**: *conformity*, *consistency*, and *complacency*. You should not give in to complacency and passive acceptance with regards to how your company might outline your career progression; that is, unless you are happy staying in one position for your whole career.

Conformity. Organizations can't develop and build everyone's career in a manner that pushes everyone to the top. It doesn't make any sense. Therefore, the advice they give must support this thought.

Consistency. As for consistency, or a dependence upon your past efforts, they should speak for themselves. Consistency in activities deemed important to management and organization success should yield some reward. If not, continuing the path may be fruitless.

Complacency. A small amount of this stuff can easily give birth to the demise of excitement, compassion, and energy. Great achievements will require great sacrifice. Anything less will only produce something less.

Create your own genius. Use your Blitz team to find a new path to success. Don't give in or give up. You'll never stand out doing the same thing everyone else is doing. It is important to know what you want and to enter an organization to obtain it.

Principle 02 - Shared Responsibility

Just as an athletic team performs better when all players work together, rather than as individual stars and benchwarmers, so will your career strategy, when all your Blitz team members recognize a shared responsibility for each other's success. That's right. No more whining, blaming others, pointing fingers, crying over failures, and so on when your career doesn't go anywhere. Your career is just that....yours.

Shared responsibility leadership results when a team of individuals is committed to a tangible vision, open to mutual influence (i.e., all team members, including the "boss," can freely propose and debate ideas as well as offer feedback), and willing to share responsibility for the pursuit of that tangible vision. In other words, it isn't just the "leader" who is responsible for making change happen, it is the entire team.

Responsibility trumps accountability. It doesn't matter what you are supposed to be accountable for; what matters is what you feel a sense of ownership for. If a person's sense of responsibility is smaller than his or her accountabilities, the accountabilities will suffer. If you don't feel responsible for your success, don't expect to get a lot of it.

Every team member's actions and successes are explicitly linked to the wider strategic agenda of the Blitz team. Born of a belief in the strength of collective efforts, individual responsibility for your career has matured into a team purpose, where every person takes a personal stake in the outcome.

Development of shared responsibility allows your team to define what each owes to the other with regards to performance, accountability, and relationship. With such an understanding, your team will have the makings of a clear and complete agreement of their purpose. When you share responsibility, the team communicates, cooperates, and holds each other accountable. Sharing responsibility isn't the only piece of the puzzle you have to create. You must also share leadership, successes, failures, and time. Sharing responsibility lifts the weight of working alone and expedites your ability to put all the pieces of your career together.

Principle 03 - Perception Management

The Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu once said, “Knowing others is wisdom, knowing yourself is enlightenment.” The most difficult concept for many ladder climbers is to grasp the concept that how we see ourselves is not how others see us. Achieving long-term success requires more than just learning about those around you. This type of success lives and breathes inside each of us.

Careers are no longer managed by organizations, but by individuals themselves. You will be judged not only on what you do, but on how you do it—so other people's perceptions and evaluations of you play an important role in your career. People with the skills to influence others' perceptions have a far better chance of controlling their own destiny.

Within seconds of meeting someone, you will make an impression on that person. First impressions are lasting; therefore, if you have made a negative first impression, you will have a hard time changing it. Doing so requires a consistent flow of new positive messages. That means learning to be aware of—and ready to evaluate—your behavior at all times. It will take time and energy. First, you must understand the existing perception of you, along with the new one you wish to make. You then need to create a bridge between the two and find opportunities to convey your positive messages. Your Blitz team is just that.

Below are some very useful tips for managing perceptions:

- Increase your own awareness; learn what you show and what you need to show.
- Be aware of the effect you have on others. Use your team to probe the audience.
- Learn to interpret other people's verbal and non-verbal signals.
- Know the effect that stress has on you and how this looks to others.
- Be visible at strategic moments.
- Encourage feedback from people you value, without making unreasonable demands.

- Allow others to make their own choices.
- Give yourself adequate time and make perception management part of your personal development.
- Be consistent, patient, and forgiving.

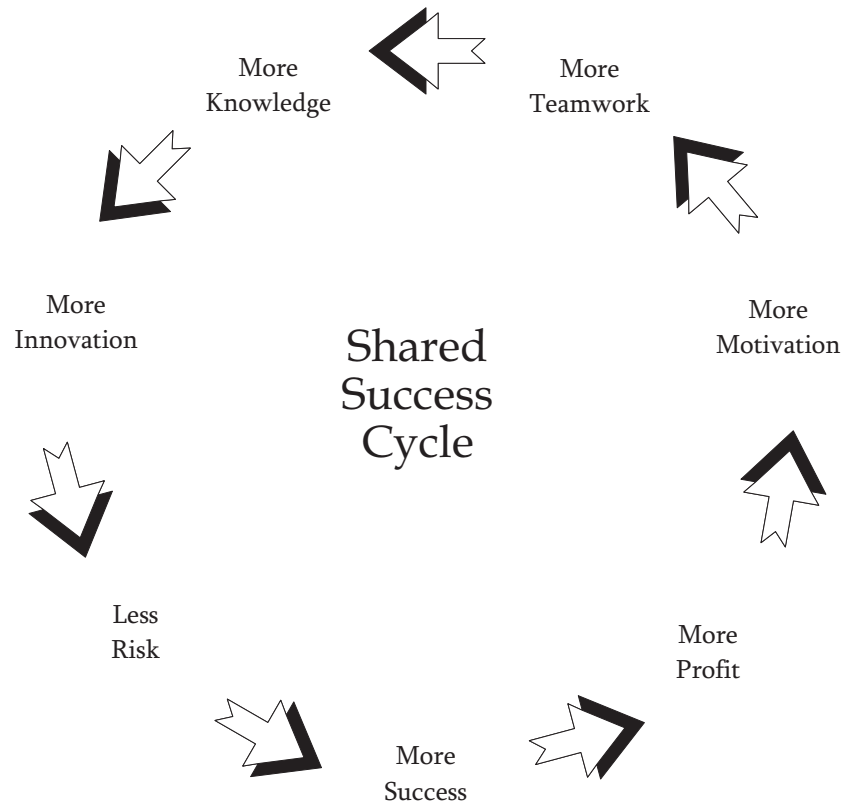
Principle 04 - Shared Success

Shared success is the art of crafting true partnerships with other individuals to boost your chances of success, sometimes with those you may have considered to be competitors. I know, this part can be tough, especially if you haven't found much success for many years. When you finally get some, we ask you to share it with someone else. However, this is a two-way street.

The advantage to doing this is that you also share in someone else's successes. Imagine that someone on your team is rewarded for good performance, and then he turns right around and does something to help your career.

Organizations today don't give us many opportunities. Engaging in hand-to-hand combat with the competition only decreases your odds of winning. It's like a big game of "musical chairs," where there are hundreds of players and only one chair. Getting a seat is much easier when you have a team of players working together to make sure one of you gets the benefit of sitting down. Once your team has the chair, then all of you have the chair. You can't all sit at once, but you sure can share the seat. As the team gets more successful, you'll eventually get your own chair. Meanwhile, everyone else will still be fighting each other over that one little chair. You and your Blitz team will have already had your time in it and have moved on to bigger and better chairs.

Sharing your career successes can have numerous benefits that will only serve to make you more successful than you could ever be alone. The Shared Success Cycle is shown to right and identifies the many benefits that make this cycle self-sustaining. By working as a team, you'll be smarter about your strategy and develop better alternate plans when it changes. The smarter your team gets, the more likely you



are to develop more innovative and create techniques for achieving your goals. Using better techniques reduces the risk of failure which, in turn, creates more success. Accomplishing more of your position and financial goals means that you're getting more money. If that's not enough to increase your motivation, you need more than just this strategy. After you feel how powerful the Blitz Technique is, you'll be more than happy to continue to drive this approach to your final destination. Lastly, the more you work with your team, the better you will get at determining what it takes to make it to the top.

Principle 05 - Shared Vision

If you are one of those people who go about doing your job day in and day out, to the best of your ability, and wonder why your career isn't taking off, you've obviously failed to create the vision that maps out the end of the road.

Without a clear vision, your team members will become self-serving. When you were tackling your career alone and felt that you had accomplished everything required for the next level but didn't get the promotion, your energy became inner-focused. Your frustration turned into anger and discontent. When others were rewarded, you began to question the reward system completely and started asking, "Why not me?" You began to lose focus of your goals. They weren't important anymore. Faith was lost. Trust was gone. Dedication to the cause was no more.

A team vision must be created to ensure the development of its meaning. This meaning positions each member at the center of the team's purpose. It drives them to action and establishes a template for decision making. When creating the vision, make sure to take into consideration purpose, vision, and values.

Team purpose: What are you trying to do? Purpose is your team's reason for existence. It answers the question "*Why?*" rather than just explaining what you do. It clarifies what goals you are *trying to achieve*. Great teams have a deep sense of purpose—a *significant* purpose—that inspires excitement and commitment. When work is meaningful and connected to what we truly desire, we are able to unleash a productive and creative power we never imagined.

Future Vision: *What* will the future look like if you are living according to your purpose? A picture of the end result should not be vague. It should be something you can actually see. Your picture should be definable and written down. If you can't define it, you won't achieve it.

Team values: How does the team behave when they are working on the strategy maps and on towards team goals? Values provide guidelines on how members will proceed as the team completes activities in each map. They answer the questions, "What do I want to live by?" and "How?" They need to be clearly described, so the team knows exactly

what behaviors demonstrate the values important to the team. They need to be consistently acted on or they are only good intentions. Good values constantly communicate the value of each member to them. Once this is lost, the value in being on the team is lost.

People can't focus on more than three or four values at once. Any more than this is pointless. If possible, rank these values. This provides the team members direction when faced with a value conflict.

Principle 06 - Trust

When you are putting your career goals in the hands of others, you're transferring a great deal of trust. Sharing your career goals and desires with your team is just like putting money in the bank. Once it's there, you don't worry about losing it. Your biggest worry is how much will it grow. But what if the bank personnel were working for you, trying to make the value of your account grow bigger and bigger. Just as you, without question, entrust your banker with your money, you'll place your faith in the members of your team.

Trust in the Beginning

As your team starts up, your trust will go through two big phases of development. Depending on the dynamics of your team, they may not occur in any particular order but will be developing at the same time, to some degree. The two phases are: *knowledge-based* and *identification-based* trust.

Knowledge-based trust comes as each team member learns more about each other, enough that they can predict their behavior. *Identification-based* trust is built as members become empathetic and subscribe to shared values. Then, each member can put themselves in the shoes of the other members. Once the Blitz team moves beyond this initial stage, a deeper trust forms and acts as fuel for building the team's effectiveness. Here are a few things you'll begin to notice:

- Team meetings take on a more social setting as members become more interested in each other.

- The role of each member becomes more clearly defined. When tasks are assigned, it becomes obvious to whom each task should be assigned.
- Each member will begin to demonstrate enthusiasm and a proactive attitude toward the team and its goals.

This isn't enough, though. You must continually strive to maintain a high level of trust among your team. It isn't as hard as you might think. Focus on putting effort into helping your team and recognizing their contributions. Lastly, celebrate your team's success. After all, it's what you're working for.

Principle 07 - Communication

The hardest thing about communication is the listening. Everyone can talk, but few listen. Listening will be the most important part of communication when using the *Blitz Approach*. You'll have to focus your listening to your team members to ensure the team operates effectively and efficiently. You'll also need to gain knowledge and direction for the team by listening to those outside the team. The technique used with each group is considerably different.

Internal communication occurs among the members of the Blitz team only.

External communication occurs outside of your Blitz team.

Establishing the team standard for each type of communication will be vital to the success of the team and should be one of your team's first objectives. The guidelines you establish for your team's communication will not be the same as what you've experienced on other organizational teams. Your focus for communication will depend on the specific tasks found in each team member's strategy map. Each team communication standard should address all forms of communication (e.g., e-mail, phone, one-on-one verbal, group verbal, voice mail, etc). It should also consider situational and cultural factors, because they can influence how the message is received.

External Communication Guide	Internal Communication Guide
Mute Don't share team strategy with anyone outside the team. Voice Mail Do not utilize voice mail to influence outsiders. Use face-to-face communication. Influence Influence managers only in a one-on-one situation, unless previously approved by the team.	Meetings Notify team members of any meeting with outsiders that could affect the team (i.e., name, position, minutes). Contacts Any new contact is shared with all team members. E-mail Major task updates are to be e-mailed to all members. Promotion Promote each team member to their identified managers, but not in their presence.

Principle 08 - Commitment

The success of your Blitz team is a direct result of the commitment of each team member. This is your career. Your actions also impact the careers of your teammates. Commitment in a Blitz team is a critical factor for success. Here's how:

1. *Naturally, people avoid commitment because it forces a restructuring of priorities* - This isn't anything to worry about. If you're on a Blitz team, you're committed.
2. *You can't have 100% commitment* - This is true, but your team will (and must) have a high commitment level from each team member to be successful.
3. *Commitment drives focus, focus determines actions* - Commitment to the cause keeps you focused, while focusing the team's energies pulls it closer to the goals.

If you get confused on what commitment really is, consider the old saying that my grandfather would often repeat, "The difference between 'involvement' and 'commitment' is like an eggs and ham breakfast: the chicken was 'involved' - the pig was 'committed'."

4. *Commitment is built by trust.* Your team members will constantly evaluate your motives. Initially, they'll constantly assess your devotion to not only your career, but theirs. The more you do as you say you will, the more trust you build. The more trust you build, the more committed they will be to you and the team.
5. *Commitment needs common ground.* No question here. You and your team are dedicated to the success of each other.
6. *Commitment builds communication.* As team commitment grows, communication will increase. Team members will quickly share more and more as you demonstrate your commitment to their career.

Team commitment grows in a Blitz team. As each member begins to achieve success from the collective efforts, their attitude towards being on the team improves. This improvement in attitude will lead to a perceived improvement in effectiveness. Once your team becomes more effective at the Blitz Approach, you'll certainly become more motivated to continue and increasingly satisfied with the team's performance. A little bit of success will go a long way.

Principle 09 - Contribution

Most people secure their future through small contributions to their nest egg in hopes that it will be sufficient by the time they retire. Many employees only stash away about 6-10 percent of their resources; the rest is spent on daily needs. Now what if you could save 15-25 percent without investing any more than you normally do? Well, this is what the Blitz team does. Your team members contribute to your success by giving you their energy, knowledge, and time.

A good Blitz team can greatly improve the rate at which you achieve your career goals. An old Navy Seal saying brings this concept into a clearer understanding. It goes something like this: "Individuals play the game, but teams beat the odds." This is exactly how you will need to

perform. Every team member must contribute to the each member's goals, as well as their own. The team's success will be its measure of every individual team member's contribution. This is not a typical company workgroup or team. No one will be asking each member of the team how much contribution each other member has made. Your efforts will be evident to the team. The more you contribute to the team, the more you shall receive from the team.

The Blitz team is a unique team. The challenges you will face and the solutions you will use to overcome them will not be similar to things you would normally encounter during your normal day at work. Your team members will look to you for not only what you have done in the past, but what you are capable of doing. Both are evaluated by the team to help assess your career plan and their ability to help you get there.

The big key to making the Blitz team extremely successful is to give, give, and give. Don't wait to be asked to assist your team members. There are many successful, financially independent people in the world, like Oprah Winfrey and Wayne Dyer, who have succeeded by putting themselves in the service of others. This is what you must do for the team.

Success is much easier when you seek it with others. Moving up a career ladder is difficult, stressful, and requires a lot of energy. On average, it takes a person twenty three years to move to a position of CEO. Energy should be focused and motivation maintained to ensure everyone can sustain a long, hard climb.

Principle 10 - Teamwork

As we look at the last principle, it may seem a little odd talking about TEAMWORK with respect to the Blitz Approach, an innovative team-based approach to getting ahead in business. You may be thinking that teamwork is an obvious part of the process. This is true. However, the difficulty with teamwork in a Blitz team comes with how the team handles success. And it will come.

Matt Twyman, avid mountain climber and native Texan, feels that overcoming a huge challenge by yourself is quite comforting to your ego. The thing we seem to forget when we climb is that we risk a great deal

when we climb alone. One simple misstep or wrong move could mean the end of pursuing your goal. In the corporate world, this is regarded as a political faux pas. Commit one of these and it is just like falling off the side of the mountain. It's the death of your career or you're left with enough damage that takes many years to heal (or many years for managers to forget).

Climbing the corporate ladder alone today is extremely difficult. The *competition is fierce*, the *playing field changes constantly*, and *the rules are always being redefined*. Your team members are an invaluable resource and vital to achieving success quickly. Having a team on your side provides numerous benefits that you won't find when climbing the corporate ladder alone. If you don't believe it, just look at how it compares to the individual approach to climbing the ladder.

Table 2: A comparison of the Individual Approach to the Team Approach

Goal	Individual	Team
Manage Conflict	You could be left as the enemy	Use it as productive energy and understanding
Decision Making	One point of view to find solutions	Several points of view - best alternative
Objectives	Build a good career strategy	Build a more viable career strategy
Planning	Figure out the skills you need	Your team helps you build your skills
Change	You may not see it coming	The team identifies change and the need for it
Motivation	It's too easy to get discouraged	Constant support and inspiration
Energy	Exhaustion	Creativity, commitment and synergy

6

Performance Assessments and Why You Shouldn't Listen

Employee reviews are probably one of the largest wastes of time for most organizations. If you've ever had one, you probably know that it provides very little useful information. So why do we do it? There is no legal requirement for an organization to do it. It appears to be an artifact from previous attempts to develop more equitable promotion and pay practices in business. Basically, it was a response to human rights legislation. While this is a noble effort, use of purely quantitative methods to evaluate performance is not a simple task. Many organizations agree with this. In a Canadian magazine survey, it was stated that 45 percent of North American workers don't receive an annual performance review at all.²⁴ For those organizations that do use this type of feedback, hard numbers aren't used. Most standardized reviews ask managers to rate employee qualities on a scale. For example, a manager may be asked to assess an employee's "attitude" on a scale of 1 (bad) to 10 (great). Unfortunately, this is purely subjective

24. John Yoswick, "Put Your Performance Review to Work for You," *Hands-On Management*, April 2001, p42-46.

and only results in a reflection of the supervisor's preconceived ideas and prejudices about the individual.

To make matters worse, many managers are not comfortable giving feedback on an employee's performance, for fear of inciting personal conflict. Because this method is so subjective, it also suffers from issues related to interpretation. Imagine being rated as a high performer for five years while working under one boss. Then, that boss gets promoted, and all of a sudden, you are not getting high marks anymore because the new boss feels no one deserves a perfect score. He thinks there is always room for improvement (and, maybe, he's right). Nonetheless, your scores are lower, and so is your rating. While this in itself is not cause for alarm, some companies link compensation to it. This is cause for alarm.

As if things couldn't get any worse, many managers perform these evaluations only once or twice a year. They spend a measly fifteen to thirty minutes a year telling you very little about how you actually perform. How do you sum up a whole year in fifteen minutes? Obviously, you can only hit the highlights. Understanding where your skill sets are, as compared to where they should be for the next promotion, is difficult when you only have time to skim the surface. It's important that these reviews focus on what you did and what you need to do. It should be a learning experience that will help you get to the next step. Needless to say, it's pretty difficult to get there when you don't know where you are. This chapter will focus on how organizations evaluate their employees, and how you can do a better job of understanding your own potential through a few self-assessments. This chapter will focus mainly on you, and not your team. After these assessments are completed, they should be shared with your team for review and modification, if necessary.

For purposes of this chapter, *Performance Management* is defined as an ongoing process of establishing clear expectations and defining job responsibilities, measuring performance parameters, and developing better ways that the employee and supervisor can work together. The key activity in performance management is the performance review. For many years, companies have struggled with the notion of removing these systems and after W. Edward Deming, in the early 1980s, popularized the notion that very little was achieved by evaluating individual performance, many did just that. Deming suggested that it did more to

de-motivate than anything else. This resulted in many organizations abolishing their systems, a move that only resulted in more problems. Unfortunately, management still had to make decisions on raises, promotions, reassignments, etc, and not knowing where they stood with regards to these benefits proved too difficult for employees. Organizations didn't like it because they had little grounds to remove an unproductive or unruly employee. The companies felt it difficult to protect themselves from any legal action taken by the discharged employees, if they didn't have the performance reviews as a documented case. Removal of such a system also brought with it a large paradigm shift, one in which most companies weren't willing to make. This resulting ambiguity in the decision making process was the straw that broke the camel's back, because it worried employees to the point that consultants were hired to reinstate a performance management system.

Corporate Performance Assessments

Today, managers still succumb to many of the myths of performance management. These myths surround ideas such as: employees are motivated by pay and incentives, organizational performance is improved by rewarding high performers while starving low performers, more knowledge of organizational performance issues (even with solutions) improves performance, employee motivation is manageable, and lastly, alignment of goals improves organizational performance.²⁵ Normally, monetary rewards are not aids in modifying long-term performance. Rather, companies should focus on training and goal setting. Companies also develop internal competition by rewarding high performers, which causes lower performers to engage in utilizing office politics to compete. These internal struggles lower the overall performance of the company and its ability to remain competitive in its market. Discussing, analyzing, and measuring aren't enough to capitalize on the knowledge advantage. A company must support these steps with a strong action plan as opposed to endless meetings, immeasurable objectives, etc. Also, managers can engage employees to improve their performance, which is more similar to releasing motivation, not managing it.

25. "The Myths and Realities of Performance Improvement Programs," IOMA's Report on Managing Training Development, March 2004.

There are performance reviews that do appear to hit the mark, such as that of athletes. During the scouting periods, athletes are subjected not only to physical tests, but also mental tests such as Wonderlic's Personnel Test. This general test of problem solving ability is one that many consider to be the best measure of intelligence. The general consensus among psychologists is that cognitive ability is the most reliable predictor of an individual's professional performance. One of the identified weaknesses of this test is that it uses limited amounts of true performance information. Also, just listing certifications as a demonstration of skills fails to highlight or evaluate the soft skills needed by many professionals.²⁶ Lastly, traditional reviews usually only contain superfluous information, which produces a risk in passing over qualified individuals for promotion.

The gloomy reputation of traditional performance reviews is not unknown to managers. Managers even share this sentiment with their employees. As if this wasn't enough, organizations introduced the 360 feedback system in the late 1980s (but used it mostly as an executive development tool). This new method was intended to be an intriguing solution to the issues surrounding the traditional performance review. In a report on 360 appraisals, a survey of 770 companies, only 8 percent used the 360 degree method while 90 percent still utilized the manager/job holder appraisal method. Interestingly, only 5 percent felt that the traditional method will be the standard method in the next 10 years, with one-third believing that it will be the most popular method.²⁷ Unfortunately, it, too, is plagued with many of its own problems. The 360 review focuses too much on the social side of performance, forcing the process to become a popularity contest, where employees spend too much time trying to get good feedback from those around them. For managers that use this as the sole source for measuring performance, it alleviates the difficulties of having to actually manage the employee. Another negative aspect of this process is that quite often those asked to perform the evaluation, such as peers, direct reports, clients, suppliers, and customers, may not have a sufficient relationship with the employee to make an effective evaluation. They may complete the form just because they were asked.

26. Kevin McManus, "How Good Are You?" IIE Solutions, June 2001, p18.

27. "Management Fact Sheets: Key Facts and Guidance for Managers," The Work Foundation, Charity No. 290003, February, 1997.

We also can't forget the good 'ol political factor. Consider the situation where you are given the request to evaluate your new boss who was hand picked by the director of your organization. To make it worse, the results will be reviewed by the director. How do you rate your boss? Do you provide an honest evaluation? Do you just give in and rate him very high? If your company puts you in this situation, consider it a sign that they haven't fully thought out the usefulness of this instrument.

Another scenario is where managers select your peers to provide evaluation of your performance. Your peers have the same education, experience, and skill sets, and are considered to be comparable in position. If monetary incentives are tied to these performance reviews, what safeguards are in place to ensure your peers don't rate you lower in hopes that they will be ranked higher? In most cases, performance reviews suffer from unintended consequences, leading to an evaluation that is less than optimal. However, one can utilize this method in conjunction with self-appraisals to develop a more complete view of their skill sets.

During your own appraisal, it is important to be truly honest with yourself. So, if speaking in front of others isn't one of your strengths, don't pretend it is. This evaluation is for you and is intended to help you improve your weaknesses and build on your strengths. Initially, an evaluation of this type should be done prior to any presentation or review of any multi-source feedback (e.g., 360 Review) of your performance. This ensures the 360 feedback doesn't negatively affect your own self-evaluation, such as changing your perception of goal performance, self-image, feedback seeking, self-monitoring, and your schema of expected behaviors. Another self-evaluation after review of multi-source data will serve as a source of self-regulation.

It is also important to understand that most statements made in multi-source feedbacks are not validated by your manager. They may be filtered to some extent to avoid obvious attempts at defamation of character, yet may still lead to an inaccurate assessment of your skills, especially if your manager doesn't know the individual providing the feedback. In short, don't focus on the agreements between the multi-source assessment and your own self-assessment; rather, use the disagreements to understand how you should modify your performance and self-image. Don't be shocked if you experience a disagreement or two between these evaluations. In a telephone survey of

twenty organizations, 90 percent of respondents indicated that feedback reports compare self-ratings with ratings from other sources.²⁸ Once you understand the disagreements, you can modify your behavior to eventually reach the goal of agreement between assessments. After all, the whole purpose of the feedback is to provide the direction for optimizing your performance and to calibrate the results of the feedback systems.

Is the agreement between self-assessment and the assessments by others important? You better believe it is. If your self-assessment is higher than the assessment of others, you run the risk of being labeled more as an underachiever rather than an overachiever. It has been proven that inflated self-evaluations, those with an air of arrogance, contributed to career derailment.²⁹ These highly inflated assessments appear to others as low in self-awareness and poorest in performance.³⁰ So, if your assessments from others indicate that you have a strong self-determination, inability to negotiate, coldness, arrogance and poor team performance, you may need to step back and look at your self-assessment to ensure it is an honest assessment. On the other hand, if your self-assessment is in close agreement with that of others, you may be close to your goal.

An important finding about such evaluations is that managers whose self-assessments were consistent with the other assessments were more likely to be promoted.³¹ While it may be unrealistic to think that we can completely optimize the relationship between the assessments,

28. Manuel London and James Smither, "Can Multi-source Feedback Change Perceptions of Goal Accomplishment, Self-Evaluations, and Performance Related Outcomes? Theory-based Applications and Directions for Research," *Personnel Psychology*, 1995, 48.

29. Morgan McCall and Michael Lombardo, *Off the track: Why and how successful executives get derailed* (Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership, 1990), Technical Report 21.

30. Ellen Van Velsor, Sylvester Taylor, and Jean Leslie, "An examination of the relationships among self-perception accuracy, self-awareness, gender, and leadership effectiveness," *Human Resource Management*, 1993, 32, 249-263.

31. Cynthia McAuley and Michael Lombardo (1990), "Benchmarks: An instrument for diagnosing managerial strengths and weaknesses," In Clark KE, Clark MB (Eds.), *Measures of leadership* (pp.535-545). West Orange, NJ: Leadership Library of America.

research has shown that it is advantageous to improve it. If promotions are a reward for balancing your assessments, it may be worth your effort.

Lastly, it is important to understand that self-assessments tend to be biased on the side of overestimation of one's skills as opposed to an underestimation, and they focus on skills and abilities more than the quality of performance. While your Blitz team will be performing this type of assessment on their own, the assessments from your manager will give you feedback on the performance of the team's efforts. As the team does better at molding your image, your assessments should begin to achieve alignment.

Identifying Your Skill Sets

Understanding your own abilities is vital to your mobility in climbing up the ladder. So, how do you measure up? There are numerous methods for accomplishing this task, but it's important to remember that each measures something different from the other tests. A good test to begin with is the SWOT Analysis, which stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. It is a straightforward model, mostly used by organizations to establish direction and create a basis for a corporate strategy. However, this simple method is a great beginning for an individual and provides considerable direction when used in conjunction with the other methods that will be discussed later. The first step is to look at the internal issues you face. Start by listing your strengths, paying attention to consider them from both your own point of view and from that of those around you (company assessments may help here, too). This list may include many of the following characteristics:

STRENGTHS: Strong dedication, strong work ethic, respectful, leadership skills, honest, persistent, self-driven, outgoing, organized.

In listing your weaknesses, it is also important to remain honest with yourself and to consider viewpoints outside of your own. Your list may include some of the following characteristics:

WEAKNESSES: Young, biased, procrastinate, quick-tempered, inexperienced, can't deal with stress, can't deal with conflict, slow learner.

The main purpose of the internal portion of SWOT is to help you determine where resources are available or lacking, so that strengths and weaknesses can be identified. Your Blitz team should perform this analysis without any help. Their results should be compared with yours. Then, as a team, you will combine and finalize this analysis. After identification of all areas, it is important to turn those weaknesses into strengths. Once you have completed this section, find any sources or behaviors that are destructive, regardless of your work environment or job position. These should be dealt with first. For example, in the Weaknesses section, I listed that I can't deal with conflict. What does this mean? What situations should I avoid at work? What environment should I seek to work in to avoid it? Utilize your team to understand these issues and create a plan for fixing them. Many times, your team will be able to provide training for you or point you in the right direction for additional support.

If you have difficulty understanding the makeup of this environment, you should seek a method to provide some insight to your deficiency. One method for understanding your conflict handling style is the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI). The TKI is a forced choice situational test consisting of thirty situations, in which you are to choose your response from a selection of two possible behavioral reactions. These situations are then grouped into five modes:

Competing: High assertiveness and low cooperativeness. Goal is to win.

Avoiding: Low assertiveness and low cooperativeness. Goal is to delay.

Accommodating: Low assertiveness and high cooperativeness. Goal is to yield.

Compromising: Moderate assertiveness and moderate cooperativeness. Goal is to find a middle ground.

Collaborating: High assertiveness and high cooperativeness. Goal is to find a win-win solution.

Your scores are graphed and provide a statistical indication of how you use each of the modes. It does not indicate that your usage of these modes is necessarily good or bad, only that it may not be the most effective for the situation. For instance, you may use the competing mode too often, indicating that you may have difficulty or be ineffective in team situations. This understanding will raise your awareness of your conflict resolution style and help you to better choose the appropriate mode for any given situation.

Another weakness that could prove detrimental to the career path is that of a slow learner. If you have graduated from college or have significant work experience, you most likely have an idea how you learn. There are three basic types of learning styles: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Since we use our senses to learn, it is most helpful to understand which senses provide for better—not to mention, faster—learning. The Learning Styles Inventory test will vary in the number of questions, depending on where you get it, but most focus on a series of multiple-choice questions. The good thing is that you can find a free version on the Internet. Each of the three learning styles is characterized below:

Visual: Sit up front, take detailed notes, benefit from illustrations and presentations, prefer passive surroundings, and often close their eyes to visualize things.

Auditory: Acquire knowledge by reading aloud or listening to audio books, talk to themselves when bored, may not coordinate clothes or colors, and sit where they can hear but don't need to pay attention to what is directly in front of them.

Kinesthetic: Can recall what was done but not what was said or seen, likes to tinker around, rely on what they can directly experience, need to be active and take frequent breaks, and prefer hands-on experiences.

Results of this type of test are useful in helping you define the conditions in which you learn best so that you can modify your work surroundings to get the most out of them. For example, if you are kinesthetic, you may want to arrange meetings that are face-to-face, as

opposed to setting up a three-hour telephone conference. It is also desirable to know how your superiors learn, because time is a valuable commodity, of which we all have very little.

Now, back to the external issues in the SWOT analysis, and the opportunities and threats. The understanding from this phase aids in improving your efficiency in adapting to changes in the competitive, socio-cultural, political, legal, and internal organizational environment. The focus here is to convert your threats to opportunities, much as the previous phase was to convert your weaknesses to strengths. The opportunities are the positive aspects of the external environment; whereas, the threats are the negative aspects. In listing opportunities, think about your current situation and the areas not addressed by co-workers, which you feel you could do or learn to do. Listing the threats is very similar and should include aspects of your competition and even internal problems that could hamper your progress. Your list of opportunities and threats might reflect those shown below.

OPPORTUNITIES: Changes in technology that allow you to provide services not widely available, changes in demand for certain services or skill sets, changes in social patterns or population profiles, and changes in government policy that may create a competitive advantage for your skill set, allowing you to expand into new markets or expand product lines.

THREATS: Your competition is getting better, job specifications are changing, market growth is slowing, government regulations are increasing, your company is vulnerable to recession and business cycles.

To overcome some of the problems with SWOT, try to focus on real issues. These are things that can be measured and improved. Avoid any “gray” area and creating long lists under each of the four areas. The lists should be manageable with goals that are attainable (with a slight stretch). You should focus on what you think are the important items and fix them first.

The SWOT analysis has told us what we do well and what we don't do so well. The next question we should ask ourselves is, “Why are we good and/or bad at these things?” The answer touches on our personal interests, attitudes, and values. These aspects of our character define

our motivation for what we do or create resistance for things we don't do. One way to understand your attitude and motivation is through a Personal Interests, Attitudes, and Values Profile (PIAV). The PIAV report measures the relative prominence of six basic interests: Theoretical, Utilitarian, Social, Aesthetic, Individualistic and Traditional. The table below identifies the personal interests related to each core motivator. Based on your responses, the test ranks your “passion” for each of the basic interests by identifying them as strong, situational or indifferent. Usually, the top two or three force you into action.

Table 3: Personal Interests, Attitudes and Values Profile (PIAV)

Core Motivator	Personal Interests
Theoretical	Knowledge, Objectivity, Truth
Utilitarian	What will work, What is useful, What makes money
Aesthetic	Experience, Expression, Beauty
Social	People, Relationships
Individualistic	Promotion, Advancement, Assertion of Self
Traditional	Finding value in life, Living by fixed values

The primary force behind the Theoretical interest is the discovery of truth. In pursuit of this value, an individual is non-judgmental regarding the aesthetics or utility of objects, but seeks only to observe and to reason. People with a theoretical interest usually challenge their own knowledge level, support their convictions with data, utilize past experience in solving problems and have the potential to become an expert in their field.

The utilitarian interest means that you want to have the security that money brings not only for yourself, but for your present and future family. People with a high Utilitarian interest will be motivated by their accomplishments, use money as a scorecard, face the future with confidence, and are very practical. Those with a social interest are regarded as “people.” They are characterized by helping others

achieve their goals if they are perceived as making significant efforts to do so, self-directed unless the direction from others improves their self-interest, and feel that things must be earned, not given.

Aesthetic individuals have creativity levels not stifled by unpleasant surroundings, take a practical approach to events, and indulge in the utility of things. Individualistic interests are characterized by competitiveness, assertiveness, and increased need for control as feelings grow stronger.

Lastly, traditional interests include a strong belief system with which the individual is comfortable, evaluating others based on their rules of living, and letting their conscience be their guide. This test scores each interest and ranks them accordingly, providing insight into how you are driven to action.

While all of the aforementioned assessments are not the only ones available, they can be found on the Internet and free of charge. Other tests that you may find interesting are the Learning Skills Profile (matching your work style to your job requirements), DISC (identifying behavior traits), and Reiss' profile (profile of motivational sensibilities). Combining these evaluations with your company's performance management program and 360 feedback reviews, one can draw a good picture of their own abilities and limitations. Such information will help you find the situations in which you can be most effective and successful. These results should be written and reviewed fairly often with your Blitz team to ensure you are always operating in your area of expertise. Once these characteristics have been defined, it will become necessary to compare them to your current workplace for a match or to determine a path for your goals and to develop an idea of the type of individuals that would best complement your abilities in a team environment. Both of these concepts will be discussed in later chapters.

7 The Management Mind-set

Having the proper mind-set, especially in a time of crisis, can do wonders for your career, or it can quickly end it. With today's rapidly changing environment, companies are almost always in a crisis so they must have a management staff capable of effectively managing a crisis. Hopefully, by this point, you have performed a sufficient evaluation on your own capabilities, compared notes with your Blitz team and have developed a clear understanding of how you would perform in higher-level positions. As we progress through this chapter, we will discuss attributes of the true leader and what makes them so different from what we normally see in the workplace. This chapter will provide valuable information that can be used to compare to managers in your company, and most importantly, yourself. As you read through this chapter, take notes on each characteristic and where your managers are in relation to the ideal position. This will help you understand what management considers important for these positions or at least, what they are willing to tolerate. These characteristics will be an important consideration in building your career strategy map.

Leaders, Managers, and Their Mind-sets

In 1862, Major General Gustavus Smith, second in command, was called into action to replace the wounded General Joseph Johnson and assume lead of the Confederacy's largest army. Overwhelmed by the hugeness of his newfound responsibility, Smith simply froze up. At one point, Smith turned to Confederate President Jefferson Davis to ask what he thought of the ongoing war and what he should do next. After only one day at the helm, Confederate President Jefferson Davis quickly replaced him with Robert E. Lee. This isn't very surprising or unusual, because most people don't know how they will react to strong situations. This also indicates that relying on probable leaders will not guarantee a company success during times of crisis or significant change. As you will learn, or may already know, the process of climbing to the top of the corporate ladder usually induces changes that you didn't anticipate or don't appreciate. There are many more examples of failed attempts to manage crisis situations. Situations like dealing with the aftermath of the terrorist attack on New York City on September 11, the attack on the USS Cole in Yemen, and recovery of failed organizations like Enron require real leadership. It is estimated that for the past ten years, the failure rate among senior executives in corporate America has been at least 50 percent.³² This provides some indication that the whole methodology behind selection of managers doesn't follow any well-thought-out path. It just happens. Somebody leaves, gets fired, transfers to another department, or whatever, so the next person in line takes over. No training or evaluation is provided. Regardless of how you get there, it's vital to have the right mind-set for this and just about any other situation you may face.

When you look at your managers, do you see a manager, a leader, or both? It is important to understand that there is a difference between a manager and a leader. A manager is not necessarily a leader; likewise, a great leader is not necessarily a great manager. Ideally, we would like a boss that is both, a leader and a manager. Unfortunately, we don't get the option to pick what we get. So, let's assume that our boss is a good manager. What mind-set would he or she have? Gosling and Mintzberg created a program that synthesizes the five mind-sets that should be practiced in management: reflective mind (managing self), analytic

32. David DeVries, "Executive selection: Advances but no progress," Issues & Observations, 1992, 12, pp1-5.

mind (managing organizations), worldly mind (managing context), collaborative mind (relationship management) and the action mind (change management).³³

The reflective mind-set refers to that part of the brain that connects the dots, so that you get a good picture or understanding. Otherwise, failure to connect the dots results in lost learning of the previous events. Reflectance is a sense of closure on an event. It allows one to draw a connection from their past experience to possible explanations of the new event. By taking the opportunity to reflect on experiences, a manager may develop a mind that does not succumb to irrational thoughts and impulsive actions. Therefore, a good manager not only works to ensure they practice reflective thoughts themselves, but also their subordinates. Their actions should demonstrate that they think about how their employees are responding to their particular learning experiences and that they consider why learning experiences are successful. For example, your manager should demonstrate, in his meetings, a sufficient ability to articulate how and why things are done and how they facilitate improvements in learning.

If your manager doesn't demonstrate these skills, look to these factors to see if they are impacting his ability to practice or develop a reflective mind-set. Some factors that dampen this ability are the demands of the job, little to no support, discomfort with self-examination, and tension in balancing personal and professional life. Imagine your boss running from one meeting to the next, working from a packed calendar of wall-to-wall fire fighting. This will most likely result in little time to retreat at the end of the day to an area of seclusion to re-evaluate the lessons of the day. But what if the next—management level doesn't value such reflection? It is likely that your manager won't either. Here's your cue to evaluate the boss' boss. Another possible reason could be that your manager has issues with self-examination. This could stem from ineffective or a sheer lack of feedback from their manager. Here's another cue. Lastly, it is possible your manager has difficulty in balancing tensions between their personal and professional life. This could be many things, such as a divorce, family health issues, and much more. Leaders differ from managers in the reflective mind-set in that they possess a constant appetite for knowledge and experience. They strive

33. Jonathon Gosling and Henry Mintzberg, "The Five Minds of a Manager," Harvard Business Review, November 2003, pp54-63.

to find new ways to understand their ever-growing world, by growth in magnitude and complexity. Leaders think about how their own practice of reflection contributes to the outcome of learning. They have mastered this ability and work to instill it into their subordinates and others around them. It can be easily seen in their actions, not just their words.

The analytical mind-set is a little more complicated than just running the numbers or checking off items on a list. During your mid-year performance review, does your boss spend ten minutes with you, for which five minutes is spent on idle chit chat? Does he just repeat the numbers received from your 360 reviews? An analytical mind-set will provide you a much deeper and thorough review of the results. A good analysis of the results may include scores from the previous year, highlighting trends and changes and providing their own personal insights. Maybe, your manager draws correlations between your productivity and the number of projects you have at one time. This would provide extremely useful information for everyone involved, especially when reviews are made and when the work is handed out. It is important to remember that this mind-set involves an approach to ideas from the standpoint of deliberate consideration. It is not simply sitting down with employees and reciting the same speech, year after year. A good demonstration of the analytical mind-set would be when your manager demonstrates the ability to break down an argument into many parts and discover the relationship between them as well, as exploring the possible underlying values that spark such behavior.

One organization that pushes this mind-set extensively, and rightfully so, is the U.S. Naval War College. In developing tomorrow's military leaders, they set out to develop their young naval students with an "elite intellectual leadership capable of unitary concepts of action and acceptance of calculated risk."³⁴ Development not only includes creation and definition of the principles to be used but also methods in which they can be carried out to achieve maximum success. The intention of the training is to instill these principles into the entire Navy through the college graduates. This mind-set is designed to improve their efficiency in formulating sound military decisions in a rapidly changing environment. Not that one would expect all managers to be

34. Douglas Smith, *Preparing for War: Naval Education Between the World Wars* (International Journal of Naval History April 2002), Vol. 1, Number 1.

able to make good, sound decisions rapidly, but because most managers are provided sufficient time, especially compared to military leaders in time of war, they should be able to form a sufficient evaluation of most any situation. Managers with a good grasp of this concept use their intuition in analyzing and interpreting situations. They try to visualize the situation they are evaluating, and, most importantly, put themselves into it. This mind-set helps managers manage the turbulence and read their environment. Such skill allows them to begin to anticipate change, manage complex relationships, engage in self-development and, most importantly, the development of others. Leaders, on the other hand, must utilize the analytical mind-set in rather unique ways. For example, they may develop a technique for establishing a balance of their own strengths and skill sets. This would be an approach to avoid overdoing one of their qualities, which may force a contradiction with another one and result in inefficiencies.³⁵ A common example of an imbalance in qualities is a manager who is too soft on employees and refusing to take a stand, when performance is repeatedly below par. Maybe, other managers take this behavior to the other extreme, resulting in an abusive leadership style. In short, leaders find ways to maximize their effectiveness.

The worldly mind-set avoids the tendency to broadly define or characterize the business environment, such as markets, values, and management practices, but seeks to generate focus by responding to particular conditions or situations that happen locally. There is one way to know if your manager has this mind-set is to watch his behavior and how he evaluates the situations around him. If you're in manufacturing, does he visit the shop floor from time to time to understand how things operate? Does he visit shipping and receiving? Quality? Engineering? Does your manager seek answers to problems with customers by visiting them and seeing the issues personally? The worldly mind-set takes into account the overall purpose of the business, which is more than just satisfying stakeholders and completing the items in your performance management program. A good manager will constantly remind you of that purpose and describe actions for obtaining it. They provide you with clarity. This mind-set is one in which leaders excel.

35. Robert Kaplan and Robert Kaiser, "Developing Versatile Leadership," MIT Sloan Management Review, Summer 2003, pp 19-26.

They not only provide you with goals and objectives, but they also paint these actions into a masterpiece that clearly illustrates their purpose, and how it fits into the grand scheme.

The collaborative mind-set is a fairly easy one to grasp. Imagine the group you work for as a football team. Don't worry if you don't have enough players, no flags will be thrown. You're on offense and your team has the ball. Where is your manager? Is he crouched down behind the center, calling out the signals for the play to be run, or is he standing on the sideline with a headset waving signals at you? The real collaborative mind-set is developed within the structure being managed. The manager must be an integral part of the group and must have a "connection" to the rest of the team. If he is on the sideline, does he see what you see? Probably not. The collaborative manager will be such a part of the team that his absence will make a noticeable difference in performance. Leaders will definitely be the quarterback on the field, taking the snap from the center.

Lastly, the action mind-set centers on the responsibilities of the quarterback. As he stands behind the center, calling out the plays, the other team members are trying to cope with the adrenaline rush. They must focus on their blocking assignments, running patterns, etc. For those on the front lines, their view isn't very broad. They can see the one opponent right in front of them and maybe the next one over, but hardly the rest of the team. They must gather all their strength to perform the assigned task and block their opponent. Can someone on the sideline provide the motivation and vision needed to carry out your assignment? Hardly. The best direction comes from someone right there in front of everyone, overlooking the field. Play after play, the quarterback dishes out reward and punishment in the huddle while discussing the next play. He is the emotional leader, picking you up when you need it, providing direction when you forget what to do and most importantly, holding the team together in the face of adversity.

Mintzberg and Gosling's mind-sets are not the telltale signs of a great manager. These mind-sets overlap each other and must be drawn together carefully to develop the ultimate in capability. These are more or less important concepts to keep in your mind when evaluating your boss and the characteristics that make up their management style. To

draw a better vision of your company's managers, combine the mind-sets with the results from Mintzberg's roles from an earlier chapter.

Measuring Your Manager's Skills

Now that we hopefully have a good idea of what roles managers play and what mind-set they have, let's define a way of measuring manager performance. Managers normally perform many activities during the day. To simplify these, we will list the activities in three categories: *interpersonal*, *decisional*, and *informational*. By looking at managers in your organization, you can get a feel as to what is important and where they need help. We can reduce these activities slightly further by separating them into two functions: *maintenance* and *development*. The maintenance functions are related to how important the activity is to the manager; whereas, the development function indicates the manager's level of improvement that could stem from development in this activity. Of course, this is best determined by the manager's themselves, but you may get a good enough representation by performing the rating on each activity yourself and have your Blitz team review it for agreement. So, for the activities listed in this chapter, you should rate your managers according to whether the activity is seen as important and if an emphasis is given to the activity. Then, rate these in terms of magnitude, such as high, medium, and low. The following table provides an example of what this may look like.³⁶ The activities show those related to a maintenance function as well as a development function. One way to improve this analysis is to redo the survey, except identify the activities that are important to your organization. Comparing the two sets of results will quickly identify what this manager can help you with and what you should be working on to improve your own skill set. In this example, you see that this manager is good at evaluating subordinates' performance. Therefore, it is likely that this manager could provide you a fair assessment of your skills. However, because they only received

36. Peter Smith, and Judith Davies, "Audit Your Management Development Climate," *Industrial & Commercial Training*, January 1976, Vol. 8, Issue 1, pp17-21.

a medium score for obtaining information related to current performance, this manager may not be able to provide the same interpretation of your performance as others may see it.

Table 4: A sample rating sheet for normal manager activities

Activity		Rating
Making sure tasks are completed	Maintenance	Low
Keeping others informed		Medium
Hiring, training, and promoting		High
Cooperating with associates		Medium
Handling disturbances		Medium
Explaining reasons for policy and actions		Medium
Evaluating a subordinate's work		High
Acting as a spokesman for the department		High
Obtaining information on current performance		Medium
Scheduling tasks and allocating resources		Medium
Producing plans to manage the unexpected	Developmental	Low
Improving interdepartmental relationships		Medium
Developing external contacts		Medium
Seeking opportunities for development		Low
Planning future operations		Medium
Improving management information flow		Medium
Developing teamwork		High
Promoting new standards of performance		Medium
Encouraging ideas		High
Assigning increased responsibility and scope to subordinates		Medium
Identifying a subordinate's potential		Medium
Improving the image of the department		Medium

A good method to help understand where your managers are in relation to their roles is to get a copy of their daily schedule from your internal network, such as through your company's time management software. Map out what they do over several days. Make sure that these are

normal business days and that no special events are planned. This will give you some indication of how they behave. If you can't get their calendar from the network, try using their secretary. If they can't provide you with their calendar, then check back often to find out where they are. You should be able to develop a good model of what your manager does on a daily basis. This is important, because it gives you insight into the mind-set they are in at any given time. So, if you have a technical issue and your manager hardly ever gets into a technical role or mind-set, it may not be a good idea to approach them on those issues. This avoids making them feel belittled when you ask technical questions. Always try to interact with your managers in a favorable situation. Once you know how they behave, finding that opportune moment should become easier.

If mapping out your manager's behavior is difficult because you don't have a lot of interactions with them, then it becomes extremely important to get as much information as possible from those interactions. The best way to get this information is to utilize your Blitz team members to engage the manager to capture what you need. However, it is possible that your team members could be in other departments that don't interact with yours. If so, consider using the company's informal networks to help gather information on their behavior. If you feel forced to do it yourself, there is another method that will allow you to read their behavior through their body movements and gestures.

Neuro-Linguistic Programming is a method of using nonverbal communication to influence others, and it can serve to further understand how others learn. All of our experiences, as derived from our senses, are coded, ordered, and stored in our minds. These experiences come out in our language and nonverbal communication. So, by developing effective communication skills, or training the senses to be more attentive to others in the communication process, one can improve interactions and relationships. Individual character types, identified by using NLP, are shown in the table below:

Table 5: Neuro-Linguistic Programming Temperament and Character Types

Character Type	Preferences
Extrovert	Sociable, seeks breadth of understanding, external, multiplicity of relationships
Introvert	Territorial, seeks depth of understanding, internal, limited relationships
Sensing	Experienced, seeks understanding from the past, fact-based
Thinking	Applies principles to learning, firmness, impersonal, policy
Judging	Fixed, settled lifestyle, decided, completed
Intuition	Decisions based on hunches, future, inspiration, fiction
Feeling	Processes info through values, persuasion, personal, social values
Perceiving	Flexible, pending, gather more data, open lifestyle

Begin characterizing your managers by determining their character types. In defining their type, there are four categories of personality: external behavior, internal process, internal state of mind, and temporal operator mode.³⁷ In looking at external behavior, determine if your managers are introverted or extroverted. If they are introverted, they will most likely be more withdrawn and territorial. Introverts tend to conserve energy, read, meditate, and solve problems. Usually introverts are not excited about opportunities to meet new people, answer the phone, or discuss problems verbally. Their counterparts, the Extroverts, are motivated by socializing and interacting with others. Extroverts tend to expend energy and welcome invitations to meet others. They also think out loud and enjoy verbal discussions.

37. Joanne Walter and Ardeshir Bayat, "Neurolinguistic Programming: temperament and character types," STUDENT BMJ, June 2003, Vol. 11, pp204-205.

Internal process refers to a description of how one may process information, perhaps by way of a practical or conceptual point of view. An intuitive thinker is creative, imaginative, future-oriented, and creative. They tend to see the big picture in terms of concepts and ideas rather than the details involved. A sensing thinker is more practical and experience-oriented. Sensing thinkers view the world through their senses. They also need the facts and focus on the details.

A third type refers to whether a person's actions are based on their feelings or thoughts. As you might think, a feeling individual will act in ways that are more personal and based on their values. On the other hand, thinkers are those that act in accordance with logic and objective. This type of thinker's actions is usually void of personal feelings. The last type is the temporal operator mode, which consists of judging or perceiving. If you know someone who focuses on obtaining closure on actions to meet deadlines or goals, they may be a judging type, especially if they strictly adhere to timelines. Perceivers will be opposite to judges in that they may seek more information and appear to avoid making decisions. They don't adhere to such strict timelines for completing tasks. They are usually fairly flexible in dealing with others.

So, despite what your managers may be, it is useful to know their types. Such information will aid in communicating and interacting with these individuals. You can test your perceptions of their type by comparing this result with the results previously obtained from Mintzberg's roles and determination of their mind-set. For example, if you think your manager is a judging type, but your survey results indicate they are low in making sure tasks are complete, you may have some issues in establishing a correlation between the two methods. Based on your previous results, you may think that your manager would be more likely a perceiving type, because timelines are not strictly observed. Regardless, understanding how individual personality types impact behaviors can be a considerable aid in gaining support and avoiding conflicts with managers.

8

Cracking the Employee Rewards System

It would seem logical, one could evaluate an organization's culture to understand the behaviors the company wants. These values, attitudes, and behaviors are most likely the ones being rewarded by management, or at least they should be. After all, it is the best way to ensure behaviors are consistent. Managers should be rewarding the behaviors they want to see repeated. As you seek to move up the ladder, you'll want to demonstrate a mastery of the characteristics managers feel are important to the success of the organization. As you may find, determining which behaviors management values can present some difficulties, as managers may not be aware that what they reward is not what they need. As we move through this chapter, we will look at how managers reward behaviors. We will also determine the desirable attributes that an organization's high performers demonstrate and the benefits they provide.

How Managers Reward and Recognize

How are we motivated to exhibit such behaviors? The behaviors employees propel with their own interest are said to be intrinsically motivated.

These behaviors are done because they see them as fun or interesting and can do them autonomously. You can imagine managers would like to create as many activities within their company that subscribe to intrinsic motivation as possible. Such activities could include matching up those with a desire for leadership with tasks that build leader skills and celebrate successes of project teams to create a sense of pride from their efforts. If all employees are motivated by their work, then the managers don't have to define ways to motivate them and can focus on other issues. Behaviors that are boring to us require extrinsic motivation, such as knowing that the boss is watching you work. Extrinsic motivation could be accomplished, for example, by creating a sense of commitment to the team. It can also be done through reward and punishment or improvement of self-worth, based on performance of such activities. Some well known examples of extrinsic rewards include pay, promotion, and benefits.

Unfortunately, managers don't necessarily do a good job with rewards. They quite often misinterpret the rewards contingency, which is just the relationship between the behavior being rewarded and the reward given. Managers undermine employee motivation through the use of inappropriate reward contingencies. Rewards can be based on completing a particular task without regard to performance (task contingent), performing at a standard level (performance contingent), or achieving good performance and/or progress toward the goal (success contingent). By inappropriately identifying and applying the wrong reward to a particular situation, managers get unintended results. Then, you have to question whether or not they end up rewarding the right behavior. If managers don't reward the right behavior, then how can organizations guide their resources towards the accomplishment of corporate goals efficiently and effectively? Identification of the correct reward for the correct behavior is really a symptom of the real problem. Before we dive off into the end result of such misinterpretations, let's consider some reasons why this happens.

First, managers are rarely trained on how to appraise their staff. When they are trained, the training is typically oriented towards the completion of appraisal documentation, thereby inferring its greater relevance to personnel than to line managers. Another problem for managers is they must manage multiple generations for which each has their own diverging priorities and attitudes.³⁸ Each generation will seek a different relationship with the organization. This requires managers to

understand the differences with each generation and the changing makeup of the workforces. If managers don't learn to appreciate these differences, they'll most likely constantly struggle with retention and personnel issues. Without knowing these differences, managers use the same motivational techniques for each employee. Managers use techniques they feel comfortable with or have had success with in the past. These techniques are used on every employee. However, all individuals are different. They don't value the same things. Therefore, motivating employees with regards to values they don't subscribe to will be ineffective. Managers must create flexible motivational techniques tailored to the individual and task at hand. To further complicate matters, organizations shuffle managers way too often. Such constant transformations build resistance to change, such as a manager trying to adjust behaviors through rewards. The next manager that comes along will undoubtedly inherit an environment of disappointment and distrust, where employees automatically condemn them to failure under the assumption their methods are the same as all the other managers before them. Then, as the new manager calls for personal sacrifice and self-discipline, they are met with cynicism, skepticism, and knee-jerk resistance.³⁹

Some autocratic managers refuse to reward behaviors because they feel employees are already being paid for their efforts. This low-energy, low-maintenance approach may have been adopted from their managers in previous positions. This authoritarian approach dictates employees recognize, respect, and obey the manager's authority with unquestioning obedience. There is no need to motivate, because employees are supposed to do as they are told. Personal feelings and self-esteem are not concerns for these managers. Managers who practice this style of management feel it is the best.

Another management philosophy is that rewards and recognition are the responsibility of the Human Resources department. Increasingly, organizations are finding they must focus on the total employee compensation package. Organizations are also developing more complex

38. Eric McNulty, "It's Time to Rethink What You Think You Know About Managing People," Harvard Management Update, February 2006, Vol. 11, No. 2.

39. David A. Garvin and Michael A. Roberto, "Change Through Persuasion," Harvard Business Review, February 2005, Vol. 83, No. 2.

recognition programs that focus on non-monetary rewards for employees, such as employee-of-the-month and lunch-with-the-CEO programs. Such programs are developed and driven by HR, which has the unfortunate effect of alleviating managers from the duty of rewards and recognition. Because they don't own the programs, managers won't do it. Many managers simply spend too little time observing their employees to know what they do or how well they do it. If the managers can't recognize who the top performers are, they'll have difficulty recognizing and rewarding anyone.

Lastly, managers don't know how to reward and recognize. The problem is not so much that managers don't understand the concept of rewards, consequences, and reinforcement; it's that managers often don't know how to organize, structure, and implement reward strategies to help them accomplish their strategic goals. Since they don't know how to do it, they simply *don't*.

Organizations: What Do They Want?

Is distinguishing what organizations really want difficult? Sometimes, it is. The major complication is the confusion in creating the right behaviors and attitudes in the organization. In fact, this confusion exists in all industries, markets, segments, etc. You'll even see it in college or your training programs before you leap into the real business world. So, in looking at some examples, let's start in academia.

Consider laws for truancy. Several states punish the perpetrator with suspension from school. Is it likely this is considered punishment, and will it result in behavior modification? Hardly. Athletic programs are another great example. They are typically designed to promote and develop teamwork and sportsmanship. The coaches, however, are frequently rewarded strictly based on their winning average, rather than the important skills and values they teach. A national championship brings financial rewards to a school, and thus, anything else becomes secondary. Even though a lot of lip service is given to improving student achievement, few efforts have been made to closely tie job or college entry prospects to accomplishments in secondary schools.

There is a similar attitude in the business sector—accomplishments and performance are nice, but they won't necessarily get you where you want to go. Being the best at what you do is no guarantee you'll be recognized for it, either. Actually, the business world may be a little worse off than academia in this respect. The following examples should provide some insight into how companies mistakenly reward the wrong behaviors:

1. Organizations promote teamwork and collaboration but only reward the best team members;
2. Innovative thinking and risk taking are seen as valuable for the growth of the organization, yet managers focus their efforts on proven methods and making few mistakes;
3. Employee involvement and empowerment are stated as being critical to keeping employees engaged, but management maintains tight control over operations and limits resources;
4. Top executives are rewarded for boosting share prices and temporary perceived value of the company, when what investors truly want is a real, enduring increase in the value of the organization;
5. Many organizations promote problem hiding when they really need problem solving, by punishing those who identify key business issues for improvement;
6. Too many organizations say they want visionary leaders, but tend to recognize only the managers who meet deadlines, manage budgets, and make sure others follow procedures, leaving the real leaders unrecognized;
7. Some organizations recognize over-performance based on easy objectives instead of employees who aim high; and
8. Recognizing all sales revenue instead of true profits, by giving cash awards for sales personnel who close unprofitable deals.

While these are only a few examples, they clearly illustrate the difficulty managers have in establishing the desired corporate culture. If managers are having a tough time figuring out the behaviors needed for the success of the company, it is likely you will be uncertain as to what actions you should seek to emulate in order to move up the ladder.

Before we try to determine the source of desirable behavior within the organization, let's look at some reasons that further complicate any easy identification of these preferred behaviors by management. Herd behavior, which refers to one's tendency to imitate the actions of others, often ignoring their own information and judgment with regard to the merits of the underlying decision, is both good and bad. It is good in that we seek to imitate the behaviors that are necessary for success in the corporate world, but is bad in the fact that those who we are seeking to impress succumb to this same tendency. Management practice is continually inundated by new conventional wisdoms, which at the time, seem dangerous to question. After gaining some initial momentum, these management "fads" peak in about five years. Then, they are usually tweaked by experts, such as consultants, to provide a clearer concept which managers then buy into. A few of these fads are listed below:

Table 6: Sample list of Management Fads

Downsizing	Reengineering	Shareholder value
Overhead reductions	Reinvention	Teams
Process redesign	Quality circles	Harvesting strategies
Benchmarking	Customer obsession	Learning organization
Employee empowerment	Time to market	Current state/desired state
Delaying	Short cycle time	Virtual company
Rationalization	Activity-based costing	Total quality management

All of these fads may contain some small kernel of viability, if implemented correctly, may have some impact on performance. After all, that's what they were designed to do. The difficulty for most organizations is that they are quick to usher in the next new craze, only to discard the old one without any conclusive evidence it was implemented as designed or if it improved performance. These results are not surprising. Business theory can be inflated to fad-sized proportions by experts who insist the theory applies to every organization. For example, organizations that could benefit from a good quality defect reduction tool, as General Electric did, would find Six Sigma to be a

good solution. However, 3M proved that techniques should only be used in situations for which they were designed through their application of Six Sigma to their innovation process. The result was a sharp plummet in new idea generation. Without a complete understanding of why a particular fad fails, an organization will often discard it and move on to the next, newest concept.

If we were watching the 3M managers responsible for the Six Sigma decision, it is likely that they would have appeared to be innovative, risk-takers in the beginning. However, after the crippling of one of their greatest advantages, innovation, we would have speculated that their innovativeness didn't include enough forethought and vision. What originally looked like good characteristics to possess, the outcome of their decisions may have suggested otherwise. Let's consider another example. Carly Fiorina, former CEO of Hewlett Packard, was once considered to be a charismatic superstar; that is, until she won the top seat at HP and failed to show any real results. In fact, the company stock price fell 32 percent during her tenure. Before she became CEO, she was known to be charming, funning, and a lightning-quick salesperson with silver-tongued marketing abilities. Despite these talents, it was her lack of experience in operations that failed her and HP. From these examples, we can see that determining the desirable traits simply by monitoring successful people can be deceiving. The skills they possess may be applicable only in specific situations. As organizations change business processes, such as through engaging in fads, these skills may serve unsuitably and fail them. It is understandable that certain skill sets are better suited for specific situations but analyzing numerous situations and the skills that serve them best is time consuming. Then, is it better to learn the characteristics that weather most situations? Surely.

Behaviors to Emulate

So, who do you emulate, compare against, and possibly compete with? All of these exist in one group within an organization. This group is known as the "high performers." They typically exhibit distinctive characteristics that set them apart from others; that is, their efforts are very consistent and important to management. What separates high-performing workers from their peers? Superior ability is part of the answer, as is superior expertise. The MIT Sloan Management Review says that

what really distinguishes high performers from the rest of the pack is their ability to maintain and leverage personal networks.⁴⁰ The most effective workers create and tap large, diversified networks rich in experience and span all organizational boundaries.

A key characteristic for high performers is their assessment of their self-worth. These individuals usually maintain high levels of confidence and maintain positive thoughts about themselves regardless of the situation. They don't try to impress others or worry about what they think about them. If you've completed the assessments in Chapter 6, there should be no need to question what others think of you. By tying your self-worth to something else, you become fearful of it. It will become the holder of your happiness. You can have great faith in your own abilities, even without demonstrating them. High levels of satisfaction become obtainable since you become driven by an internal locus of control. Internal locus of control is giving yourself the power to influence your feelings about yourself. You are then fully responsible for your own thinking, emotions, and actions in life.

Aside from high self-worth, high performers have several other easily identifiable characteristics. These factors include:

- Good communicators - They are able to elucidate their thoughts and feelings on issues, especially those that tend to be more technical and difficult to understand. They perform well as a public speaker and demonstrate an art for translating complex concepts into easily-understandable terminology.
- Personal likeability - They possess similar personal qualities that reciprocate positive feelings about us. These qualities promote a sense of cohesiveness while satisfying some of our desires for affiliation.

40. Rob Cross, Thomas H. Davenport and Susan Cantrell, "The Social Side of Performance," MIT Sloan Management Review, Fall 2003, Vol. 45, No. 1, pp. 20-22.

- Trust - High performers can easily be found in environments, where they feel empowered. These individuals not only need this trust to perform, they gain significant trust because they can perform. You can usually find them near the center of the organizations trust network.
- Positive attitude - Scientific research has found all high achievers have an achievement-based attitude. Failure is unthinkable and not an option. This attitude starts with the belief that results can be controlled or impacted by actions. The high performer doesn't wait for things to happen. They make them happen.

Just like professional athletes, high performers have characteristics that set them apart from others and lead to them to success. While they may not be the best at everything, their skill sets provide an uncanny ability to accomplish their work.

As discussed in the beginning of the chapter, managers and organizations have difficulty with rewarding the behaviors that move their company in the right direction. Even identifying the behaviors to advance you quickly can be hard to discern. Organizations engage in numerous faddish activities, which they later abandon before completion, blurring the picture of what it takes to impress the upper echelon. However, there is a group of employees who provide a constant example of the behaviors that can lead to success. High performers obtain the trust and respect from their managers and peers, which provide them a significant support network. You can gain significant advantage by learning from high performers. You should seek to emulate them and hopefully become part of their network if not have them be part of your team. If you think their characteristics are important and useful to your strategy, you're right. This approach is not the end-all to your strategy, but only a small part of what is suggested in this book.

Building Your Blitz Team

Creating a highly effective team will be challenging, but can be accomplished through three phases: team sizing, member selection and culture, and goal effectiveness. Choosing the size of the team relates directly to the effectiveness of the team; too much or too little can essentially render your career goals out of reach. Just as size is important, who you put on your team is critical to its stability. A mismatch between personalities and the organizational culture could result in a total inability to accomplish any task and welcome the birth of constant bickering and fighting among the team. With everyone on board, an evaluation of the chemistry between each member can illuminate issues with communications, rewards, risk-taking, decision making, planning, and teamwork. Lastly, the team must be able to accomplish their goals. The anticipated effectiveness can be measured by considering the specificity and difficulty of each goal, along with the team's motivation and participation level. As we progress through this chapter, we will look at how to size the Blitz team, choose your team members, match them up with the organization's culture, measure the team's effectiveness in achieving their goals, and lastly, how to utilize each member's leadership abilities.

Sizing Your Team

Before diving into the desired characteristics for possible team candidates, it is necessary to take into account the size of the team to be developed. Defining the size of the team won't be easy and deserves careful consideration. The quantity of members you choose will have a considerable impact on a number of important factors. As someone who knows the value of teamwork, Karen Middleton, Assistant Basketball Coach for the University of Illinois, feels that "team dynamics, communication, cohesion, motivation, structure and level of participation are all extremely critical elements to the performance of the team." As you build your team, it is important to remember that a larger team doesn't necessarily improve your ability to accomplish your goals faster.

In larger teams, the obvious advantages are a more diverse set of skills, knowledge, and better problem solving ability. It also protects the team against the loss of a key individual and improves conformity to team norms. However, the disadvantages to large teams include a reduction in participation by each member which can result in decreased motivation and satisfaction. Contributions by each member are less rewarding because everyone is working on a smaller piece of the puzzle.

Smaller teams do have advantages over larger teams. For example, smaller teams will promote more individual participation, because the activity (or inactivity) of each member has higher visibility. Smaller teams also provide more opportunities for members to communicate, effectively allowing members to learn more about each other, such as their strengths, weaknesses, and work style. This aids in developing stronger personal relationships and generating greater satisfaction in working together. With improved communication and participation, the vision and goals of the team are more clearly understood which, in turn, will result in improved efficiency in defining team structure and procedures.

Blitz Team Member Selection and Team Culture

In selecting Blitz team members, it is necessary to know the team culture you desire. This section will consider some important characteristics that you must include in your assessment of members such as the organizational political environment, individual leadership styles, networking, passion, drive, and several others. Again, you should have sufficient data about your organization to aid in determining the best fit for the team.

An understanding of the political environment of your workplace is crucial and necessary in defining what you need in a team member. For an understanding of these environments, we can turn to Dr. Kathleen Reardon. Reardon says there are four basic political environments.

- *Minimal* - rarely use unsanctioned practices.
- *Moderate* - run by the book but will sometimes circumvent the rules.
- *High* - encourage circumventing the rules.
- *Pathological* - rules and procedures mean very little.

If you know what type of political level your organization has, then you can use this to define the political acumen needed for your team. For example, if your environment is pathological, you'll need team members who are adept at soliciting support from others by generating their interest in achieving that particular goal, which should be in line with yours. If your environment is minimal, high political savvy is not as necessary. So, whoever you choose, their political style should match the environment or they should possess considerable adaptability skills to fit the given political environment.

There is no one right way to lead or manage all situations. In choosing the most effective approach for your team to cover as many situations as possible, it is advisable to build a team with several leadership styles. Rowe, Reardon, and Bennis developed the Leadership Style Inventory (LSI), which is a simple test to help identify their styles. It

focuses on the leader's adaptability in the face of change and how they engage others in the process of change.⁴¹ The LSI identifies four individual leadership styles:

- *Commanding* - results-driven individuals that seek short-term goals.
- *Logical* - long-term analytical types.
- *Inspirational* - make radical changes with new ways of doing things.
- *Supportive* - strive to engage others and facilitate the work.

If you choose good leaders for your team, don't be surprised if they have the ability to switch instinctively between styles. So, if you have your prospective members take the LSI, don't forget to consider not only their primary style but their secondary style as well.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, informal networks exist and are extremely important. If you can't recruit individuals that are at the hub of the advice, communication, or trust network, try to choose someone else who relates well with them. For your team to develop strong, strategic relationships within informal networks, each team member must behave in ways that move them closer to key positions in the networks. These behaviors can be taught, but it is best to choose those who are already positioned for their role in the team. These team members will help build personal relationships and involve others in meeting your goals. Therefore, the key is to find individuals with a desire to not only use the network but become it as well.

Another important—and more personal—characteristic of a team member is the ability to create and maintain positive relationships. Individuals with a strong propensity to develop these relationships will spend the necessary time to do so while demonstrating significant patience. They recognize equality and promote mutual respect. Their actions are positive and show appreciation for the positive actions of others. They express goodwill, improve the quality of relationships, and

41. Kathleen Reardon, Kevin Reardon and Alan Rowe, "Leadership Styles for the Four Stages of Radical Change," *Acquisition Review Quarterly*, Spring 1998, p129-146.

see the assets and strengths in others, rather than the faults. To ensure team success, the positive, uplifting relations among team members are improved with compatible personality traits. They should have an affinity for one another and look favorably upon each other.

Each team member must also be passionate and driven to excel. The tasks your team will face can be daunting at times. The climb up the ladder can be a long and treacherous road, which has a tendency to erode passion. You won't always have the time to help your team members accomplish their goals. Each member should be capable of acquiring resources and finding solutions on their own. They should subscribe to a proactive approach where the acquisition and distribution of new knowledge to constantly changing situations fuels their own personal motivation, that of your team and invokes the best in others. Great teams possess a great passion with the ability to awaken productivity, commitment, sense of purpose, and vision. As a result, the team is equipped with the tools to make their career dreams a reality.

The last, and probably the most important consideration, is Emotional Intelligence (EI). A term coined by Salovey and Mayer, EI is described as "a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action".⁴² It is a measure of how well you can control your own emotions (good and bad) and how well you get along with others. Individuals who score higher in the ability to accurately perceive, understand, and appraise others' emotions areas are better able to respond flexibly to changes in their social environments and build supportive social networks.⁴³ In searching for someone with high emotional intelligence, you should look for individuals that have a good ability to identify emotions (and their effects) in others as well as a strong sense of their own strengths and weaknesses. As for their social side, these individuals should be able to easily recognize and respond to the needs of others in a way that inspires, motivates, and drives them into action. High EIs also

42. Peter Salovey and John Mayer, *Emotional intelligence*, Imagination, cognition, and personality, 1990, 9(3), 185-211.

43. Peter Salovey, Brian Bedell, Brian Detweiler, and John Mayer, *Coping intelligently: Emotional intelligence and the coping process*. In C. R. Snyder (Ed.), *Coping: The psychology of what works* (pp. 141-164), (New York: Oxford University press, 1999).

demonstrate good conflict resolution and relationship development. While this is not a complete list of competencies for High EI individuals, it should provide a rough picture of what they look like.

Goal Effectiveness

Consistency of effort is another essential trait. If a team member maintains the same amount of drive and determination throughout all of their actions, they are likely to have consistent outcomes. They are also likely to condition others to help further the team's intended goals at a much faster rate, because people naturally respond to actions that are consistent before those that are inconsistent. Consistency establishes a positive perception; it helps others to establish boundaries and to know where you stand. When your efforts are consistent, it promotes a stronger sense of self-worth by highlighting your high performance level. Think of some of the world's greatest athletes. What if their performance wasn't consistently impressive? Would they still be considered great? Consistency of effort is a measurement tool that can, in fact, serve to define us. Below are a few examples of the greatest consistent efforts in sports history. Many of these still stand as inspiration for us today.

Table 7: Consistent Efforts Scoreboard

Joe DiMaggio's game hitting streak	56
Cal Ripken playing in consecutive games	2632
Brett Favre's streak of consecutive starts	205
Wayne Gretzky's game scoring streak	51
Johnny Unitas' streak of straight games throwing a touchdown pass	47
Orel Hershisier's consecutive inning scoreless streak	59
Edwin Moses' straight hurdles finals wins	107
Rocky Marciano's straight fight wins	49
Lance Armstrong's straight Tour de France titles	7

High levels of energy from a team member can influence other team members to work harder, longer, and more effectively. Good teams will have individuals with high levels of physical, mental, and emotional energy.⁴⁴ Typically, these energy capacities can be increased. Therefore, higher-levels of morale can be sustained. Energy has a far greater impact on your work than time does. The amount of time you have in your workday is limited, but the amount of energy you have in that time frame to complete your activities is not.

Competitiveness is a critical element on two fronts. On one end, members of the team should be driven to outperform their peers, achieve results, and impress management with their skills and abilities. The drive to meet the competition head to head is the same force that will push the team up the ladder. Once this force is diminished, say, by a member becoming complacent after a promotion, the team could lose some of its forward mobility. On the other end, the competitive nature of each member will drive them to seek respect from the other members and the determination to perform at a higher-level. This friendly competition can influence each member and persuade them to learn from each other to improve their own individual performance, which, in turn, heightens the team's output.

Hopefully, the members you choose also possess significant leadership skills. This characteristic gives us some insight in their effectiveness within your organizational climate. Research indicates that most of the inconsistency in an organizational climate is due to the differences in leadership styles.⁴⁵ Differences in leadership styles are one of the major sources of conflict in leadership. If the members you select have leadership styles that force them to operate in a culture distant from their own, they will run into numerous leadership issues due to the imposition of their dominant style on the situation. You will want to understand the most effective leadership styles that exist in your organization and ensure your team doesn't have a dominant style that would consistently conflict with the dominant styles in the company. While there are a large number of differences between leadership styles among managers, you can always count on three major areas to

44. Steve Bucholz and Thomas Roth, *Creating the High Performance Team*, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1987).

45. David McClelland and David H. Burnham, "Power is the Great Motivator," *Harvard Business Review*, March-April 1976, pp. 100-110, 159-166.

be quite similar, regardless of cultural differences. These areas are technical expertise, competitiveness (i.e., willingness to push for results), and establishing standards for excellence (e.g., for themselves and others). Despite all the differences, your team should be able to find common ground with other managers.

One of the biggest challenges you may face will be the leadership of the team. What you should hope to see in your team is the existence of *rotational* leadership. As your team moves through the strategy by accomplishing tasks, the natural abilities of each member will take center stage. Therefore, when tackling a particular task, the team member with the best skills suited for it should lead the team in accomplishing it. For example, maybe your team needs to gain support from a particular external supplier that the company uses to influence a manager's impression of your abilities. If one of your team members has a close relationship to this supplier, they should lead the strategy for gaining this influence. There is little need for formal leadership. Think of your team as being knights at the round table. Everyone is equal and places the same amount of energy, devotion, and effort into the goals of the team.

In establishing team values, each member must participate and concur. The team must define the values pertinent to the successful accomplishment of their objectives. It may be useful to create a charter that illustrates these values chosen with the signatures of all members. This would serve as a reminder of the mutually agreed-upon behaviors. Lastly, it is the responsibility of every team member to enforce the use of these values. If one member steps "out of bounds" the other members must be able to effectively communicate this infraction to the team. All members are responsible for monitoring the adherence to the core team values. Below is a list of common values developed in strong collaborative relationships:

- Accountability
- Effective Communication
- Risk Taking
- Collaboration
- Good Morale
- Service Orientation
- Loyalty
- Initiative
- Supportiveness
- Compassion
- Mutual Respect
- Trust

If your team has plans to achieve spectacular results, note that this may require bold moves. Therefore, as leaders, you must make personal commitments to:

- Accept responsibility and uphold decisions.
- Be fair and open-minded with others.
- Be forward-looking, yet mindful of the past.
- Lend support to others.
- Foster an environment of trust among your team.
- Emphasize effective communication.
- Cultivate creativity, independence, and participation.
- Emphasize the expansion of responsibilities.
- Encourage intellectual curiosity.
- Ensure adequate training and continuous learning.
- Model the standards of professional behavior.
- Promote shared decision making through open dialogue.
- Recognize the value of team members' contributions.
- Share knowledge and expertise.
- Show energy and enthusiasm.
- Respond and adapt to change.
- Take the work seriously.
- Reflect and learn from actions and outcomes.

Leadership is the creation of relationships that nurture and engage in the sharing of responsibility for the success of the team. Through these guiding principles, values, and commitment to action, you can build a team that functions in unison. With all members acting in congruence,

achieving your goals becomes much easier. Consistent goal attainment leads to consistent success. This generates energy and excitement, reduces competition, and fosters collaboration that drives your efforts to achieve more of the team's goals.

Finding the right individuals is one of the most difficult tasks in creating a Blitz team. You shouldn't be afraid to try out as different individuals as it takes time to get your team right. After all, this is your career. While you may have considerable time until retirement, you don't want to spend it in the same job or at the same level until. Once you find the right combination, you will be able to overcome many of the barriers that typically hold teams back. It will be like watching a NASCAR racing team. The car pulls into the pit. Every member of the team knows exactly what they must do and perform it to the best of their abilities. No one has to remind anyone of what they need to do or how to do it. The team just seems to flow effortlessly in what looks like carefully orchestrated motions. This will be the same feeling you'll get when you have the right team. Success and opportunities will appear. It won't seem like it comes from your efforts, but it will be. The power of a great team is immeasurable. That's why so many organizations seek them and why should you create one.

Mapping Out Your Course

Once your team has been established, it's time to put a strategy in place. The key to executing this strategy will be to ensure everyone on your team understands it. You must all be operating on the same page. Therefore, you'll want to provide some visualization for the team to follow. It's not necessary to develop a step-by-step map but more of a reminder of each team member's area of focus and the direction they want to take. A strategy map is a useful tool. This map should outline four key areas: career, connections, growth, and team. These areas illustrate the cause and effect links to obtain the team goals. The strategy map presented here is an adaptation of work presented by Kaplan and Norton.⁴⁶ The map is to be read from the bottom to the top and is designed to illuminate any discrepancies between your team's strategy implementation and the skills necessary to put them into action. In this chapter, we'll walk through each section and highlight the important aspects.

46. Robert Kaplan and David Norton, "Having Trouble with Your Strategy: Then Map It," *Harvard Business Review*, September-October 2000, pp167-176.

The TEAM Section

Starting from the bottom up, let's first look at the *Team* section. This section includes considerations, such as targeting the right people to influence, defining the competitive advantage needed, devising the skills to present to managers, focusing on activities with best return, assigning tasks to team members, and determining the motivation techniques to keep progress moving forward. In targeting the right people to influence, your team should highlight those who will be the most helpful in obtaining team and individual goals. For example, if your manager doesn't recognize your efforts, it wouldn't make a lot of sense trying to impress him. However, you've noticed that your manager takes lead from an engineering manager in another division, and one of your team members would like to move into a technical role in the engineering department. Then, you would want to identify the engineering manager as one for the team to target. Your team should identify managers one to two levels above your own manager. If you identify individuals outside of your organization, make sure that they are well-accepted inside of your company and respected as an authority in their area of expertise. Your goal in identifying individuals to influence is to achieve credibility among the leaders and get your ideas accepted without doing it yourself. In this manner, your expertise is somewhat "peer reviewed" and widely-acknowledged. Without such recognition, there is no credibility and no influence. Remember, the Blitz is designed so that the team promotes your ideas, not just you. So, the likelihood of them being accepted by others is greater.

Determining the team's competitive advantage is one of your most critical tasks. Your competitive advantage will be the skill sets that place you and your team above the rest of the competition. It's what sets you apart from everyone else. Some of the best skills to demonstrate are those that are typically advantageous for the company to possess. Good customer relations skills are those related to:

- superior customer focus,
- conflict resolution,
- brand portfolio management,

- positive company reputation, and
- customer relationship management.

Technical skills that are typically beneficial to organizations include the ability to secure publications, patents, and low-cost techniques that provide a technical advantage for the company. It is beneficial to use your connections within the company to ascertain the skills that management struggles to achieve. Maybe your team can aid the company with expertise in forecasting and planning, business process improvement, employee motivation, organizational efficiency and effectiveness, coordination, portfolio management, and communication. So, no matter what skills your team has, compare them to what the company needs and promote them. Seek opportunities to show them off to upper management. Establish yourselves as the experts in those areas.

In devising the skills to present to management, it is important to not present too much. You've already realized your competitive advantage over your peers, and maybe even existing managers, but exhibiting your know-how does pose some risk. You must have a clear idea of the way others perceive your skill sets. For example, I always wanted to be seen as a technical expert. When I would hear of a technology my company was interested in learning, I would find several published papers on the latest research on this technology and become very familiar with them. Then, I would seek opportunities to discuss this technology with my peers and managers. Having intimate knowledge of the latest research on this technology made others think that I was an expert in this technology or at least knew a lot about it. Eventually, I would have others coming to me asking questions about this technology. At that point, I knew how they perceived my abilities.

Influencing management is your key goal, but you don't want to alienate those around you by a misinterpretation of your actions. Consider an executive that always sought others' opinions during meetings in an effort to make them feel they have a voice in the operations of the company. He always provided opportunities for lower-level managers to step up to the task and take the lead; some managers did, but most didn't. Because these lower-level managers held the perception that executives usually force their agendas on others, they perceived this executive as being indecisive. Since his leadership style didn't meet the lower-level managers' perceptions, he was seen as

inferior leader. Therefore, always be aware of the characteristics or behavior you intend to demonstrate. Use your team to ensure you are getting the desired response by allowing them to help create the impression you desire before you even present it. It's similar to listening to a movie review from a friend, which convinces you to go see it. A little positive hype can create the actions you want.

Your team should focus on the activities with the best return. Most likely, these activities will be directed towards relationship-building. Skill-building shouldn't involve the whole team, though it is likely that some of the members will work together to share skills. After building your strategy map, proceed to formulate strategic goals to support each one of the intents shown on the map. Each goal should have a measure of performance, target, and the goal owner. Make sure you have clearly defined what each measure (or indicator) means. Check if you have control over the method that you are using to measure performance. If you have no control over the measure, it might be a good idea to leave it out. Focus on the things you can control.

When assigning tasks to team members, it's important to consider three things: *ability*, *workload*, and *task reviewer*. These factors ensure the task can be completed, has the opportunity to be achieved and that knowledge from completing it is shared.

- *Ability* - The task should be assigned to the one most equipped to perform the assigned function. The team should work to retain sufficient adaptability; in other words, they should use the information from the task environment to adjust their strategies through use of compensatory behavior and reallocating resources.
- *Workload* - It's also important to evenly distribute the work to be done among the team members to avoid depending on a limited number of people for the team's ultimate success. Coordination of all tasks must be maintained to ensure the team's resources, activities and responses are being utilized efficiently and effectively so as to not interfere with company assigned tasks.

- *Task Reviewer* - Each task assigned should be reviewed by another team member to ensure completeness. All team members must develop the ability to give, seek and receive task, clarifying feedback. This includes the ability to monitor the performance of other team members, provide them constructive feedback regarding errors, and offer support for improving performance.

Finally, for the team section of the strategy map, a focus on determining the motivation techniques to keep progress moving forward must be performed continuously. First and foremost, strong personal relationships are helpful. All team members should understand each other's needs and expectations, as well as their work style. This is crucial and aids in avoidance of typical emotional pitfalls, such as anger. Getting angry with team members won't help you achieve any of your goals, or those of the team. Establish techniques for conflict resolution that focus on separating emotion from facts. Deal with the issues first, and emotions later. Combine solutions that promote a win-win solution. Aside from conflict resolution, it is imperative the team is given a reminder of the needs they are seeking to fulfill. Therefore, establish an interval for reviewing the team's goals and the strategy for obtaining them. If the needs are not communicated often, the probability of action is diminished. On the other hand, if the probability is high, each member will pursue their needs and the team goals actively.

The GROWTH Section

The *Growth* section of the map is to identify or highlight the needed skill sets, training, and learning from other team members. It should also be the place where you determine your motivation and define your strengths and weaknesses. Typically, teams reward behaviors that benefit the team, as well as those behaviors that promote cohesiveness and effectiveness. In the 1970s, American POWs in North Korea built the most organized and cohesive groups in Southeast Asia. These men developed unique communication techniques, taught each other classes in Mathematics and languages, and played pranks on their captors in an effort to overcome the torture. Every participating POW added to the cohesiveness of the group and strengthened the group norms. Many POWs that returned declared good leadership as one of the main factors in maintaining such close-knit groups. As your Blitz

team grows and gains trust from management, the team will be allowed to experiment with different styles and approaches without losing productivity. The team members will support each other in ways that encourage the use of available resources to acquire new work roles. These new roles promote the opportunity to develop new skills and talents. Ideally, these will be transferrable to other environments and rapidly deployed throughout the organization. With new opportunities becoming available, this section becomes a living document requiring constant monitoring and updating.

So, what are your individual needs? Look first to your goals in the career section. Your final career goals will provide you some insight into the overall skill sets you need to obtain. The roles and responsibilities for the positions you obtain along the way to your ultimate position will vary and require you to be flexible in order to adjust. Each position or experience should provide new tools to handle the next, allowing you to become better equipped to solve problems, handle complexity, and act in a wide variety of organizational arenas.

There are a number of factors to consider when defining your goals. Some of these factors are the degree of acceptance, difficulty, and feedback. You must fully accept your goals, because a higher degree of acceptance results in a higher degree of self-efficacy. As you complete your goals, it is important to obtain some feedback and perform an analysis of your efforts. While this feedback may not necessarily contribute directly to your success in achieving each one, it definitely contributes to how and what your future goals become. When you do obtain feedback from others, don't worry if it is negative. Constructive criticism can actually help guide your performance by indicating areas that can be improved. Request that your team provides feedback that focuses on what you do well and what needs improvement. Lastly, establishing your growth goals should incorporate activities that possess factors you can directly impact and control. This use of such internal factors reduces ambiguity and promotes a direct attribution of your results to your efforts. Vague outcomes, ones where your effort can't be directly measured, can lead to an attribution to external factors for which you have less control. Maintaining clear measures has the tendency to improve decision making and certainty.⁴⁷

47. Kevin Spink and Glyn Roberts, "Ambiguity of outcome and causal attributions," *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 1980, 2, 237-244.

The CONNECTIONS Section

The *Connections* section incorporates many of the resources needed to accomplish the activities you've outlined in the *Growth* and *Team* sections. In the next chapter, you will learn to identify who your central figures are in each of the internal networks (i.e., advice, trust, and communication). These people will become essential figures in your extended team network. Once you learn the key members in each of your company's informal networks, you will be able to combine all of your resources into this one section to illustrate your "community of practice," so to speak. This community will most likely be extremely diverse, and it should be, because you'll need them to resolve a diverse set of situations. The bigger the community becomes, the more prepared you'll be for the future. Therefore, a key element in this section is to continue efforts to expand your external network.

The external network consists of individuals outside of your organization, such as your doctor, barber, or priest. These individuals can be within your profession and may take interest in your career progression or personal and educational growth. Expanding your network usually involves activities such as researching your industry, profession, and the company. Professional organizations are an excellent source for making external connections. Find out when the local ones meet and join them. Take a position on their board. Be active and network. Being at the top is the ultimate position for networking. It becomes your job. As the information age continues its growth, networking takes on a whole new meaning. Web sites like LinkedIn.com attempt to provide a stage for members to connect, based on numerous variables such as degree, college attended, former employers, and current employers. This method is not bound to geographic location, industry, or peer group, and provides you the opportunity to connect at any time. You just keep trying until you get the connections you need.

Another method for making connections is to engage in mentoring. Find someone you admire and respect that has a lot of connections within your organization or another one. Maybe you gain the support and expertise of a local professional that works closely with your company or is often tapped for their opinion. You could engage them in providing a small amount of mentoring to assist you in your career growth. Draw them into your network as a promoter of your abilities. Their opinion can move you up the ladder faster than most opinions.

within your organization. But don't stop with just one. Numerous mentors can aid in the development of business and technical acumen within various areas of your company. However, you shouldn't just limit yourself to a more formally-establishment mentorship; you should also seek opportunities to gain advice and expertise from those you encounter during conferences, training, meetings, etc. There's no such thing as bad advice. Remember, you don't have to use it. Providing advice to others is somewhat self-gratifying for many people, so you should allow yourself to build stronger relationships by simply *listening* to their suggestions.

The CAREER Section

The *Career* section of your map consists of your team's financial and job position goals, both short- and long-term. The financial goals don't have to be dependent upon your position goals. Just because you reach the job you want doesn't mean the money will be there. In determining your financial goals, it may be useful to understand your organization's strategy. Most likely, profits are at the top. But how does the company anticipate increasing their profits? Possibly through improved customer loyalty or quality. If you feel they will reach them fairly easily, then there is a good chance you may be able to accomplish your financial goals. If the company is having difficulty obtaining their financial goals, your approach to achieving your own may change. Assuming the company has a good chance of hitting their financial targets, your team must then discern how rewards are given. For example, a company may say it desires "risk-takers" but rewards those that follow procedures and guidelines. Once you know what and how they reward, align your short- and long-term goals with that of the company's. Goal alignment aids in developing the right skills to get you to the next level.

In determining your position goals, each team member needs to examine the roles and responsibilities at each level, understand the necessary leadership competencies, develop activities to incorporate those in your strategy map, and then learn to transition between the levels (e.g., making lateral moves). In most cases, you'll decide between two paths: managerial and professional. The managerial pathway will be of interest to those wishing to move to levels of management or leadership, while those who follow the professional

pathway are typically focused on specialized occupations, such as engineers, doctors, lawyers, etc. So, let's assume you choose the managerial path. To determine the true roles and responsibilities, it is most useful to ascertain what is typically requested for these positions, what is practiced, and what is needed. It may be difficult to find out what is typically required for a management position, but a good place to start looking is with your boss. You could simply mention that you're interested in the managerial ladder and want to know the general requisites. If that doesn't work, look on your company's Web site or bulletin boards for any posted positions. You could also get the information from your HR department or another manager. Below you will find a general list of key responsibilities for managers. You will also see a list of competencies along with the desired level for each one. As you may now suspect from previous chapters, the requirements for the position may be quite different from what is practiced.

Key Responsibilities/Roles

- Manages a work function or unit by focusing on the achievement of objectives.
- Coaches employees to achieve desired results.
- Requires knowledge of managerial processes and people issues.
- Management of human resources; in some cases, may involve management through team leaders or supervisors.
- Responsible for determining the operational requirements of the business plan at a work unit level.
- Ensures that the section's financial and human resources are utilized effectively and efficiently and that its goals and mandates are being realized.
- Has a sound understanding of the related field of work and has an ability to apply concepts and theories to implement or improve work practices, functions, or units.
- Provides input and advice in the development of policies involving issues that impact or relate to a work unit or department.
- Participates in strategic and business planning for the division by proposing new operational targets and service delivery improvements.
- Operates within a 1-2 year timeframe.
- Finds solutions through analytical, interpretative, and evaluative thinking.
- Directed by unit mandates, policies, practices, procedures, and management systems; has authority to act in areas of accountability.
- Defines problems, develops alternatives, and a recommended course of action

Example Titles - Manager, Project Manager, Program Manager, Coordinator

Managing is not just handling tasks: it's also leading people. Managers should demonstrate competencies that are measurable, or at least identifiable, for their position. The competencies are specific to each level of management and require a certain level of mastery. To understand competencies a little more, it is useful to define them in six categories: strategy and future, administrative and operations, leadership and team building, political skills, problem solving and decision making, and organizational and environmental awareness.⁴⁸ A competency, defined here, is basically a visible skill, ability, or behavior that contributes to successful job performance.

The *strategy* and *future* category includes competencies like understanding and development of the organization's vision, an ability to manage change, effective risk taking, and sufficient analytical capacity. The *administrative* and *operations* category deals with skills in inventory administration, cost accounting, facilities maintenance, sales, and advertising. *Leadership* and *team-building* competencies include building teams, recognizing performance, motivating, coaching, and developing. *Political skills* include persuading and influencing others, forging alliances, negotiating effectively, and conducting meetings. The *decision making* category includes behaviors and abilities related to problem identification, accurate problem diagnosis, and flexibility in decision making, judgment, and perception. The last category, *organization and environmental awareness*, encompasses abilities in understanding organizational culture, knowledge of related positions, and an awareness of organizational structure.

The table below is an example of some of the competencies required for a managerial position. Note that, in this case, the managerial position is just above the supervisory position, which is an individual contributor's first opportunity at management. The second column in the table identifies the level or possessed magnitude of each competency required. These required levels are much higher than the individual worker. For example, the manager must be able to demonstrate decision making in situations that have little information or high risk.

48. James Hunt and Joseph Wallace, "Organizational Change and the Atomization of Modern Management," Management Development Forum, 1998, Vol. 1, No. 1.

Typically, this would not be a situation for individual contributors or supervisors, because they would be expected to consult their managers for such instances.

Table 8: An example of required competency levels for a managerial position

Competency	Can make decisions in the following situations:
Decisiveness	ambiguous or high risk
Employee Development	ambiguous or high risk
Goal Orientation	ambiguous or high risk
Strategic Orientation	ambiguous or high risk
Team Leadership	ambiguous or high risk
Self-Confidence	ambiguous or high risk
Relationship Building	ambiguous or high risk
Influential	ambiguous or high risk

Once you have good understanding of necessary requirements for each rung of the ladder, you need to incorporate activities that focus your efforts on obtaining each and every goal in an efficient and effective manner. You may want to split these activities up into two categories: short- and intermediate-term. The short-term activities focus on performing activities that allow you to complete particular goals within a year. For example, if you intend to move from a supervisory position to a management position, some of your short-term goals may include leading a team of direct reports, managing a small project with a budget, or taking college classes to learn a new skill.

Intermediate-term plans, which have both a strategic and operational component, tend to span three to five years. If your career goal is academia, you may set intermediate goals, such as obtaining your Ph.D., tenure, promotion, defining your research interests, building a diverse network of colleagues, etc. For each set of activities, it's important to identify not only the activity to be performed but also an expected performance metric, time, and any cost or benefit to you. You should try to be specific on the tasks, subtasks, amount of labor

involved, materials, and returns. The more detailed you are in this planning, the easier it will be to monitor your progress, which, in turn, increases your likelihood of remaining on the plan and achieving your goals.

Lastly, your position goals should incorporate the knowledge you gain as you seek your ultimate goal. To aid in this learning, you should recognize the impact of individual-level and organizational-level variables on career mobility. These variables are shown below:

Table 9: Variables that impact career mobility at the individual and organizational level

Individual Level	Organizational Level
International experience	Public status
Type of degree	Size of current organization
Previous Career Advancement	Size of former organization
Years of education	Financial performance
Job Tenure	Operational excellence

At the individual-level, executives are typically recruited from bigger companies, like General Electric and PepsiCo, which focus on developing leaders with broad expertise in areas such as sales, finance, and marketing.⁴⁹ This way, companies gain the benefit of improved leadership without having to train employees in order to develop it. Interestingly, promotion obtained early in a career has a favorable impact on future promotions. Research results show that early promotions can set career parameters, such as the ceiling and the floor for advancement.⁵⁰ Two other important variables that impact your mobility include the perception of performance and self-monitoring. While actual job performance is important, the perception of this performance is enhanced by the perception of having prominent friends at work.⁵¹ Self-monitoring is the conscious management of social expectations of

49. Michael Leuchtnr, "Management farm teams," The Journal of Business Strategy, 1998, 19(3): 29-32.
50. James Rosenbaum, "Tournament mobility: Career patterns in a corporation," Administrative Science Quarterly, 1979, Vol. 24, pp220-241.

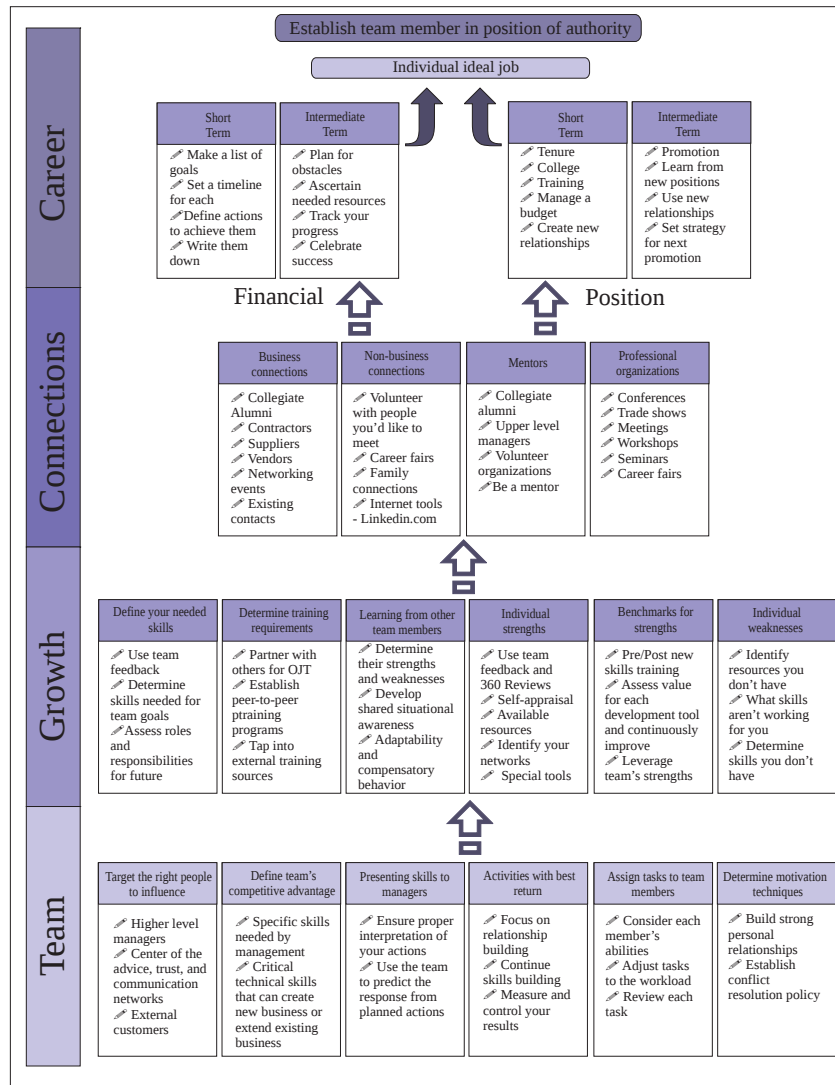
one's role. Individuals that are good at self-monitoring will be sensitive to the social and interpersonal cues regarding situational appropriateness. Individuals that typically do not self-monitor tend not to alter their behavior, regardless of the situation. As you might imagine, people who are effective in self-monitoring tend to have higher mobility.

As for those who make leaps on the ladder by changing companies, the variable at the organizational-level is the reputation of the organization the executive is leaving. Perceptions of one's skills and abilities are enhanced by leaving a more prestigious organization, especially when moving to a smaller organization. Variables such as the organization's size, public status, and financial performance are not very significant in this case. However, managers are more willing to receive a smaller promotion for an opportunity to join a larger, more prestigious organization due to increased promotional opportunities, higher salaries, and more training. This indicates that size and financial performance do come into consideration when choosing a potential new place of employment. The individual variables, such as years of education, job tenure, and international experience, are not significant.⁵² From these results, it may be inferred that organizations may seek their talent from more highly-respected organizations. As previously mentioned, organizations assume that these individuals are more talented and, therefore, offer a higher value. Consequently, you should recognize that managing the perception of your capabilities is critical because it supports the perception of your organization which, in turn, increases your value.

51. Martin Kilduff and David Krackhardt, "Bringing the individual back in: A structural analysis of the internal market for reputation in organizations," *Academy of Management Journal*, 1994, Vol. 37, pp87-108.

52. Monika Hamori, *The Organizational Predictors of Executive Career Success in Between-Organization Transitions*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, 2000.

Team Career Strategy Map



Networking Through Informal Networks

Recovering from a period of restructuring proves to be an incredible obstacle for many companies. But why? Executives place a great deal of effort in the planning of the transition. Surely, nothing is missed. But alas, the performance of the company doesn't improve, so the next year the company changes again. One major problem is executives have not figured out how to tap into the most valuable resource they have: *Informal Networks*. Informal networks are not visible; therefore, management usually takes no actions to maintain their relationships. These networks are created naturally. For example, consider the way schoolchildren choose teams for games during gym class. Team captains choose members based on their ability to play the game, regardless if they know the other child well. The captain wants a team that is going to win, so they want the best players they can get. Well, adults aren't much different. When faced with a significant task and the opportunity to select assistance from others, we'll choose the people who we think can help us most. Now, imagine how strong and stable these networks can become for employees of a company that work together for many years. These networks can be intricate

and embedded throughout an organization. They may not be easily seen from the ground floor, but they can be found.

Companies can gain insight into how these networks operate by performing network analysis. Typically, the relationship networks studied are the *trust*, *advice* and *communication* networks. The trust network tells which employees share delicate political information and support each other in a crisis. The advice network shows the prominent players in an organization on which others depend to solve problems and provide technical information. The communication network reveals the employees who talk about work-related matters on a regular basis. A network analysis may involve questionnaires to get an idea of how people interact with each other. Results are also reviewed for validity. For example, if Tom is the center of the advice network, he should be cited as an expert by several employees. After all results have been checked, companies dump the data into a canned software program that draws out the network maps.

Organizations today will find their networks full of talented people. Many of which have similar sets of skills and talents. So, how does one particular employee stand out from the crowd? They utilize the same networks that managers use. Imagine your executive managers talking on the phone and revealing important information about the strategy and plans for the company. Now imagine you're listening in to the call without anyone knowing. Well, that's where informal networks come in. These networks are also social networks. Within these social circles, people trust, communicate, and share information. If companies can tap into these to improve their performance, why couldn't you? Past research has linked informal networks to career advancement, meaning they are great resources when you are trying to move up in the organization.⁵³ All you have to do is to tap in.

Having spent many years in a high-tech research environment, Dr. Hong-Jyh Li, Staff Engineer at Intel, will tell you even the most technically-literate individuals need someone to serve as a confidant or sounding board in order to gain insight. According to Dr. Li, "Even in a company filled with some of the world's greatest technical experts, an advice network is clearly visible." You might not think that such

53. Ronald Burt, *Structural holes: The social structure of competition*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

cognitive horsepower would need support from others, but they do. In fact, these individuals tend to collaborate more heavily than those in less technical fields. It is fairly safe to say, no matter where you work, some sort of advice network exists. The central individual to this network can be inside the company or outside. There have even been studies that demonstrate distance learners, such as an online college degree program, develop similar network structure as do the traditional students.⁵⁴ It is important to remember here that the networks operate on interactions, so physical proximity is not critical.

So, what is an advice network? An advice network consists of relations through which individuals share resources, such as information, support, and guidance, related to the completion of one's work. The advice network is unique in that it is not necessarily based on friendships or social interactions, but interactions that are based on completing tasks. You can think of these relations as knowledge relationships, because knowledge-sharing is a main ingredient.

The central figures in these networks typically hold considerable expertise in a certain area. That's why people seek them out for assistance. The members of the advice network share some appropriate level of accessibility. After all, what good is having the answers if no one can get to you to get them? To be useful in the advice network, one must possess relevant information that can be tapped into in a timely manner. The central characters in advice networks are extremely efficient in finding solutions or information that can aid others in solving problems.

While knowledge is the main key to advice networks, it has other characteristics that make it a valuable tool. The list below highlights some of its advantages:

- *Timeliness.* It's not only about having all the answers, but being able to find the path to one quickly. Timely advice is useful, and it is what makes a member of the advice network more critical to the rest of the network. Answering an e-mail request for assistance five days later may not be helpful.

54. Heng-Li Yang and Jih-Hsin Tang, "Effects of Social Network on Students' Performance: A Web-based Forum Study in Taiwan." JALN, Sept. 2003, Volume 7, Issue 3, pp93-107.

- *Engagement.* For many, being with those individuals at the center of the advice network can create engaging and enlightening experiences, as well as new insight into problem solving. It's not sufficient to provide someone the answer; you win more points by teaching them your thought process and why your solution is more viable.
- *Trust.* Advice experts allow those seeking assistance to feel as they are being helped, and that the interaction is held in safety. Those seeking aid don't want to be held hostage for the answers. The best advice-givers make people feel as if they are seeking answers to that same question, even though they may not be. It is about providing a sense of trust.

Knowing who is at the center of your advice network can be extremely beneficial. They help a lot of people by providing access to information, resources, and opportunities. These central members are usually more respected for their expertise and well-liked, because they don't mind helping others. Popularity is a benefit when your performance is based upon this perception. Cody Thomas, director of operations at The Redd Group, a California-based manufacturing company, argues that, without popularity, you can suffer from bad perception. He states, "I've known many managers who had no idea what I did on a daily basis; yet, they still had to rate my performance. I know, they weren't aware of my actions because they've asked me directly, 'What do you do?'" Managers that spend little time with their employees can't be expected to effectively judge their efforts from a few interactions, and often, their only choice is to use the opinions of others. They will ask those around you *about* you. If these other people are part of your network and have a favorable opinion of you, you'll be fine. If not, don't expect a high rating. If this sounds like a popularity contest, it is, to some extent. Just remember, the center of the advice network is a knowledgeable individual and one who has earned their position. Access to information is another great benefit. Because those near the center of the advice network help many people, they learn about many activities taking place in the organization. Quite often, they'll know more about things that are to come than most others. Wouldn't it be great to learn of acquisitions, new business ventures, reorganizations, and layoffs long before they happen? It usually takes time to plan these activities and usually only a small circle of employees are aware of them. An advice guru at the center of the advice network, would likely be one near that

circle. These are the relationships you need to build. Treat every situation as a new opportunity to grow your network and build for success—because that's exactly what it is.

Formal communication networks, for the most part, are not very effective. Some of the illnesses of formal communication are due to the fact that information is filtered as it moves through the organization's structure. The message gets stripped of small pieces of its meaning as it goes from one level to the next. This leads to an unintended distortion of the message and could also lead to an opposing message, if the individual communicating the message disagrees with it. Also, managers within large organizations can't possibly engage in conversation with all of their constituents, especially on a daily basis. Some organizations span a great deal of physical landscape, making communication to all parts of the organization problematic. Organizations, as mentioned earlier, are also in a constant state of transformation. This can result in a broken or changing formal communication structure, language barriers, cultural disparities, and differing values and identities. Therefore, members of the organization construct their own communication network: the informal communication network. This network is used consistently by almost every employee in the company to communicate inside and outside of the organization. For example, you're at work, on your way to a meeting, and you stop by a colleague's desk to ask a question or provide information about a particular project they are working on. Your input allows this employee to continue to make progress on their work. No formal meeting was necessary, nor was any input needed from management, yet tasks are being accomplished.

The informal communication network plays a major role in compensating for the above-mentioned inadequacies of the formal network. Formal structures have a tendency to create roadblocks to communication, such as lack of common experience. As organizations continue to flatten out their management hierarchy by eliminating positions, managers gain broader responsibilities, forcing them to communicate within subject areas outside their expertise. Many times, the technical and business types are forced to interact in the same environment. Troy, a field service engineer for a high technology tool manufacturer, faces a difficult technical issue beyond his expertise. He discusses the issue with his manager, who unfortunately is not a technical type. During their discussion, Troy spends more time describing what he was doing rather than the problem they are encountering. The manager

needs sufficient detail, just so he can ask for support from another manager. It may have been more efficient to just go straight to another expert than through both managers.

The informal communication network also serves to protect employees from being isolated from their colleagues by spurring creative thought and developing personal relationships. It brings together those who have similar interests, values, experiences, thought processes, and communication styles. Think about this for a moment. The informal communication network has a tendency to attract members that have things in common. So, if you carefully observe visible relationships within the organization, you can get an idea of their network affiliation.

The Trust Network

Trust in organizations has several major benefits. It has the ability to influence problem solving and creativity. It can also improve the organization's efficiency and effectiveness by allowing the company to alleviate control mechanisms designed to monitor employees and to utilize this energy in other areas.⁵⁵ In moving up the corporate ladder of an organization, it is likely that the amount of trust increases as you reach the top. This is because the managers at the highest levels are responsible for establishing the desired level of trust in the company. They set the desired level of trust by creating and maintaining the organization's culture. So, they will attempt to support the preferred attitudes, norms, values, and behaviors through formal and informal policies that establish the culture. This trust is extremely important to managers, because, to some extent, it defines how employees will respond to a given situation. In this sense, trust is "primarily guided by their potential use for the realization of material benefits or the avoidance of material losses."⁵⁶ However, you may also see it as simply attaching emotion to your relationship with others. In our quest to move up the ladder, the most useful definition is a combination of

55. Samuel Adams, *The Relationships Among Adult Attachment, General Self-Disclosure, and Perceived Organizational Trust*, Ph.D. Dissertation, February 2004, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

56. Rafael Wittek, Gerard van de Bunt, and Maurits Klepper, "The Evolution of Intra-Organizational Trust Networks," *International Sociology*, September 2005, Vol. 20(3), pp339-369.

both. This is not to imply that the highest level of trust will be with management; you will most likely want to evaluate the trust network from the bottom up, structurally speaking.

As you carefully monitor social interactions throughout the organization, note the connections employees have with each other. More importantly, observe the quantity of connections and where most of those ties exist within the network. Because we are most interested in befriending the central member of the trust network, we should look for individuals with numerous direct connections with other employees, because they will, presumably, possess high levels of trust.

For organizations, central members of the trust network pose a couple of risks, if they are moved or removed. First, a loss of this connector could result in a significant reduction of trust in the organization's strategy, direction, or purpose, especially if the removal is viewed as unfair. Secondly, organizations will incur more difficulty bringing new employees into their trust network. Other important members of the trust network are commonly referred to as *brokers*. These members occupy positions that bridge sub-networks such as marketing and finance departments. They maintain key relationships between sub-groups. Brokers have the ability to bring together support from various groups within an organization. Removal of these brokers from the network can result in an inability to muster unified support across the organization or even between groups with differing values and perspectives, such as production and management.

Lastly, you should be able to quickly identify peripheral members, as they appear disengaged and loosely connected to the network. This could be due to insufficient social skills, poor attitude, or dissatisfaction. Their presence is not highly visible from within the network and is normally not considered in decision making. While these members do not have significant connectivity to the internal network, they may be highly connected to external networks—so care should be taken not to avoid their support until carefully evaluating their position.

Identifying a complete social network in an organization is quite time consuming and challenging from a logistics point of view. Most likely, you won't be able to develop and perform surveys to find out everything you'll want to know about each person in the company. If you desire to briefly define your company's network, try following these steps:

1. Select the particular group you think will provide the most strategic benefit, such as upper-level management if you desire to move up, or another group if you desire a lateral move. Make sure the group you choose suits your goals. Don't waste a lot of time plotting the whole organization's network.
2. Look at each individual in terms of information flow; consider where they get information and to whom they give it. Another observation to consider is the impact of the interactions. Maybe, interactions with a highly-connected individual seem to always be pleasant and motivational. This may explain why they are so well-connected.
3. Note the behaviors and feelings shared between employees during their interactions. Remember the actions that create a good exchange of information with each individual, because it will aid you in establishing your connection to them.

Normally, organizations that perform a Social Network Analysis (SNA) will develop a survey, implement it, collect data, and analyze the results to define the makeup of their network. You won't need to go to that much detail, but if you can, you should. Otherwise, you may just want to keep a few things in mind during your observations. For key individuals, find out how long they have been with the company, what their function is, and what role they play in the organization's strategy. Find out how effective and efficient they are, and what the obstacles are in getting their work done. Note who their friends are, and who they go to for help. Answers to these questions may help you understand why they hold a particular location in the network. Every connection is unique and should be treated that way.

As you create your connections to the network, make yourself and your methods original, so others remember you. It's all about marketing. If you have a snappy phrase, nickname, etc., share it with those you meet. Communicate what you do, what you're good at, and how you can help others. Your team will also be marketing your key assets. In this manner, when opportunities arise that you may be suitable for, your connections will think of you. Establish a rapport with each connection. This can be easily achieved by seeking guidance from them regarding career path and overcoming hurdles and obstacles in your work. Other tips for building your network are shown below:

- Avoid redundant ties - don't connect with people who have the same connections within a network.
- Choose many distinctive ties - select connections to new people, groups, departments, networks, etc.
- Establish weak ties - connections to people you don't share a lot in common, since they provide access to others you may not reach otherwise.
- Ask questions - use your connections in the network to learn about others.
- Study the accepted level of reciprocity and improve on it.
- Join professional associations and organizations.
- Take initiative in making friends.
- Start conversations to learn about others.
- Always demonstrate a high professional manner.
- Maintain a great attitude.
- Never show negative emotion or stress at work.
- Get a mentor.
- Learn to become part of groups.
- Observe, observe, observe.
- Keep your appearance polished.

While formal organizations establish a hierarchy and formalize it in an organizational chart, a diagram that depicts the structure of an organization in terms of relationships among personnel or departments, it rarely defines the actual intricacies of their inner workings. Placement within the chart doesn't indicate proficiency with any particular element of internal organization networking. Those listed at the top of the chart aren't necessarily the center of the communication, advice, or trust network. As a matter of fact, most executives know very little about the

informal networks in their company. Therefore, these untapped, uncorrupted sources within informal networks can provide numerous advantages for you to build your career. The best part is, they are there when you need them, and you can access as many or as few as you like. You can start small and build your way up. This isn't a fast process, but it is extremely important, if you wish to build a career. People naturally like to help others and feel appreciated for doing so. You just need to find reasons for them to help you.

How to Market Your Blitz Team

Marketing your team throughout your organization will be an important factor in your success; yet, you may very well limit your success if you reveal too much information about your team. If everyone learns who your team members are and your strategy, they will assume that your team members will promote you regardless of whether they believe you are worthy of their support or not. Their credibility could be questioned and result in less influence. As with modifying perception, it is important to control the information being distributed about you and your team. While the exact approach to how you communicate and market your team in your company is somewhat dependent upon the informal network structure, there are some general guidelines that will help you maintain a good personal reputation and serve as an effective endorser of your team members.

Professional Image

An extremely powerful tool often utilized in establishing and maintaining professional credibility within an organization is the professional image. Your image is the collection of other's perceptions about your character and capabilities.

These factors are compared to the company's culture and the norms defined in it. For example, a candidate walks into a conference room for a job interview. The first thing the manager noticed was his attire. Strangely enough, the candidate was wearing black shoes, black trousers, black shirt and a black tie. The candidate's attire lost him the job. It was so far out of the norm, the manager couldn't get over it.

It's important to understand what your company's standards are, and to make sure you meet them, as a minimum. But, once you get there, don't get too comfortable. As you move up in the organization, you'll begin to work with higher-level managers that possess their own culture and factors that are required for acceptance. These factors can be quite different at each level of the organization. Much of the difference is due to the changing intensity of business politics as you climb higher on the ladder. If you are to be successful as you climb, you must understand these quintessential characteristics that the next level of managers holds dear.

According to Al Dean, Integration Manager at Lockheed Martin, "The right attributes for getting promoted change with each promotion and rung on the ladder. At one level, technical knowledge is critical. At the next level, you may find that attitude is more important." In short, there are no standard characteristics that you should be proficient at that will elevate you in all levels of the organization. Each level possesses forces that impact and influence its leaders, forming a different definition of roles, power, politics, and qualities for membership to the club. Identification and incorporation of these important qualities will contribute to a more respected professional image from management, as well as enhance your ability to communicate information regarding you and your team throughout the organization.

Active Listening

Have you ever wondered, why we have two ears and only one mouth? Maybe, it's an indication that we don't listen enough. In fact, many of us are terrible listeners. If you want to take advantage of the corporate grapevine, you have to learn to listen. Unfortunately, there are a lot of barriers to being a good listener. Oftentimes, we turn off our focus during conversations for numerous reasons. Below is a brief list of distractions:

- We already know what's going to be discussed.
- We try to solve the problem before it is totally stated.
- We prepare our response too early.
- We succumb to a barrage of technical distractions (e.g., pagers, phones, e-mail, and so on).
- We daydream.

Conversations usually occur around 200 words per minute. However, psychologists have told us that we can fully comprehend a conversation much faster than this. For most of us, that's about 500 words per minute. Considering we can think about 1000 to 3000 words per minute, our conversations hardly utilize our abilities. With such capacity for absorbing information, we often attempt to maximize our capabilities during communication events by engaging in other activities. Good listeners take advantage of the difference between speed of thought and the speed of speech by engaging themselves in the conversation. You can improve Active listening by:

- Focusing on listening,
- Postponing judgment,
- Avoiding disrupting the communication process,
- Summarizing,
- Probing, and
- Formulating questions that take the conversation deeper into the speaker's message.

Good listeners will speak about 30 percent of the time and listen for 70 percent of the time. The rest of us listen about half of the time. Combine this with the fact that most listeners are distracted 75 percent of the time, it is quite amazing we get anything at all from a conversation. Listening, as well as avoiding disruption of the speaker, are difficult and may require development of a new discipline. Listening helps you gain

insight, while allowing the speaker to deliver their message will develop a relationship. Listening provides immediate gains, while avoiding interruptions goes to the development of long-term gains.

In my own Blitz team, my team members have come to know me very well. So much so that they often feel they know “exactly” where I’m headed with just about any discussion or topic I bring up. Many times, they interrupt mid-sentence with their response and evaluation of my thought, before I even complete it. At times, this makes discussions last longer than they need to due to the requirement to provide additional clarification and redirection of the conversation, when their assumptions are wrong. Many times, they take the conversation where I had no intentions of it going. Once we get off the chosen path, my message doesn’t carry the same meaning because of the influence prior to its initial disclosure. In a sense, they rarely let me set the stage for my argument. Therefore, my message, now considerably shorter than planned, must carry a greater message to have the same impact without the buildup. Fortunately, in our advanced stage of development, we agree to be interruptible but to not interrupt.

An easy strategy for improving your listening skills is to remember to concentrate on the activity itself and avoid all tendencies to interrupt the speaker. In doing so, you convey a sense of respect, interest and concern for their issues for which they will gladly reward you with the same. These are instrumental factors in creating relationships. Once you build such relationships, others begin to share more about themselves and others. People want to share their lives and willingly do so, when conditions are right. Learning about people is learning about the organization. The more you know about the organization, the better you can develop a strategy for success. For example, as you listen intently by the watering hole, you learn that the CEO makes all of the business decisions in the company but takes some guidance from the director of the Program Management Office. This is extremely useful information. It could keep you from catering your efforts to other managers who really have no impact on company decisions.

Remember that listening is learning. There are very few activities I can think of, where you can gain so much from doing so little. As Oliver Wendell Holmes put it so elegantly, “It is the province of knowledge to speak, and it is the privilege of wisdom to listen.”

Effective Writing

Writing is the most powerful tool for thinking and communicating. Napoleon Bonaparte, in the height of his military career, stated, “There are only two powers in the world, the sword and the pen; and in the end the former is always conquered by the latter.” Our thoughts, ideas, and answers unfold before others and slowly bring clarity and resolution to the image we cast upon the canvas. We use writing to constantly demonstrate our command of language through e-mails, project reports, presentations, ads, letters, publications, and so on. Such frequent use provides ample opportunity for us to communicate positive information about ourselves and our team. By using writing to implement portions of your career strategy, you can influence decision makers and respected professionals inside and outside the organization.

When writing, such as e-mail, the personal characteristics that tend to have great importance in other personal dealings become irrelevant. You are not the same person you are elsewhere—you are what you write. This is a critical concept to embrace. Many times an e-mail relationship is all we will have to maintain with higher-level managers. Without any real face-to-face interactions, these managers will view your words as a real representation of you. If you manage this type of communication well, you gain a very valuable business tool. If you manage it poorly, you can quickly generate serious problems and obstacles to career advancement.

Maintaining a focus on communication is vital. Failing to be focused or being inconsistent in your focus can result in unpredictable results. It is quite difficult to support your goals or even plan the next steps, if your efforts are giving you inconsistent results. Remember that people learn (and change) easiest from consistent behaviors. If we seek to get help from others or convince them that they should be helping us achieve our goals, then we must provide a constant voice that suggests just that. The best way to ensure you maintain a focus is to establish a communication plan. Creating such a plan is not difficult. As you reach out in support of your goals, concentrate on audiences that

1. provide the greatest bottom-line value and
2. have the greatest potential for being reached.

The big-value employees in your company will be those that have influence on others and can provide some serious support. There is no need to waste a lot of time on someone that can't necessarily make a decision or sway others in your favor. This isn't to say that you shouldn't convince them to support you; it just implies that you need to monitor your efforts and go for the highest return.

Once these individuals are identified, your messages must improve knowledge or change attitudes, which in turn, influence behavior. However, a greatly planned message that never reaches the recipient doesn't accomplish much. Therefore, your focus should also concentrate on those influential individuals that can be reached fairly easily. This may require a little creativity on your part. For example, getting an e-mail to an executive could be tough, if his messages are screened by an assistant. But, if you have the message forwarded by someone with a little more visibility than yourself, you stand a greater chance of being heard.

As these opportunities to communicate materialize, make the most of them by:

- Keeping your message simple. Use as few words as possible. Respect your recipient's time.
- Keep in mind the tone of the message, voice, and sensitivity. If you set the wrong tone, such as insulting or demeaning, you'll lose credibility extremely fast.
- Make certain that your tone is respectful. Try to avoid insulting the reader. Consider the cultural implications your message may have.
- Using an active voice will communicate confidence. The readers shouldn't need to interpret what you are trying to say nor do they need to validate its truth.

A good leader treats everyone fairly, and so your messages should confirm your desire to do just that. Take the time to read your words before you send them. Use your team to read them to ensure your message communicates clearly and concisely the message you intend. Your team can provide valuable perspectives and interpretations that you may never see alone.

Writing has the power to induce great change. Joseph Conrad defined it very eloquently when he said:

My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you see. That—and no more, and it is everything. If I succeed, you shall find there according to your desserts: encouragement, consolation, fear, charm—all you demand—and, perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask.

You should use your writing to develop a monopoly on how others perceive you and your team. Generate a vision for all to see, rather than allowing them the option to choose their own. Use your words to explore and challenge, creating images that will ignite and reveal. Every communication is an opportunity—an opportunity to see you in a whole new light, in a vision, with integrity and with imagination.

Speaking Ability

Speech is the vehicle by which we build relationships, encourage understanding, and communicate our thoughts. As you proceed throughout your career and life, you'll find that many people gauge your intelligence by the strength of your speaking skills. Speech is a process in which we create sounds and mold them to form words. Without any integration of cognitive or neurological abilities, we would simply sound like a bunch of cavemen grunting and yelling. The introduction of musculoskeletal skills supports phonation, and, with a little help from the brain, language is born. Then, we can generate the feelings, thoughts, and emotions in a verbal form that everyone can understand.

For most of us, the process of speech is automatic. We are neurologically programmed to do it. As for the language part, we learn it. This is the point where many of us stop developing our communication process. The vital step many of us never seem to improve focuses on the delivery of thoughts, feelings, and emotions. From Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Day of Infamy" to Winston Churchill's "Iron curtain" to Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech, our history is full of examples of oratory genius. These men have uttered words that are

still very alive today. Such displays of brilliance illuminate the power of speech. Always remember that a good delivery has the power to force people to action.

The instant you rise to speak to others, you assume a position of leadership. Failing to capitalize on these opportunities can quickly lead your career down the wrong path. A friend of mine from Great Britain referred to this inability to capture key moments as “Doing a Ratner.” He went on to explain the history of Gerald Ratner, who was once a millionaire CEO for Ratner Groups, an extremely successful chain of jewelers in Great Britain. He stepped into stardom one evening when he delivered a speech to UK-based organizations for company directors. During this famous speech, he mentioned that he could sell his products for such low prices because they were “total crap.” Unfortunately, the media got hold of this and plastered his comments all over the general public, resulting in a massive loss in the value of the company. A short eighteen months later, Ratner was fired. They even removed his legacy by changing the name of the company to the Signet Group. Today, the British still use the phrase when someone in the retail industry tarnishes the value of the company's brand and quality through a verbal blunder.

We have learned from those great orators before us, it's also possible to blaze our own path through the use of powerful and passionate language. By using some of the traits of their usage, we can build up our own verbal art that will capture the ears of the managers we seek to impress. Once we have their ears, the path to their thoughts is wide open. There are many literary devices the great orators of our time have used to move their audience. Many of these are applicable in the workplace and can be used to promote ourselves and those on our Blitz team. One very common device used by Martin Luther King was repetition. In his “I have a dream” speech, King brings the audience from the past to the present with the phrase “One hundred years later,” which he says five times. The use of repetition ensures that the important points are not missed or forgotten and achieves coherence. This can be a powerful tool for building a reputation in the workplace. If your team reiterates your importance and value to the organization in a repetitive fashion, management will hear and, eventually, believe it.

Another important device often used by Winston Churchill, and one you may often choose when speaking with management, is analogy. Analogy is a way of expressing the unfamiliar in familiar terms. Churchill mastered this device. His analogies would make his audience creative participants in the definition of meaning. He once described a failed military offensive as if “it was like throwing a bucket of water over the floor.” Churchill would utilize his audience to help complete the image he wanted them to draw. His diction would simply create a few points and allow the audience to connect the dots to form the picture. Analogy can be an indispensable tool when ordinary experience provides no clue of the concepts you wish to discuss. It's not safe to assume everyone knows what you are talking about. Take time to formulate an analogy or story that defines your topic in terms everyone will understand.

Lead your audience to the conclusion you seek. Accumulation of argument is an extremely powerful device, where you present point after point, driving your audience to the only possible conclusion: yours. Consider an example where you are seeking a raise in salary. You have two possible approaches to your request: one is to simply ask for it, the other is to quickly build a case that proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that you deserve it. The first situation is simple. Now, consider the response when you walk in to your manager's office and provide a list of ten things that you have accomplished that are outside of your normal job responsibilities. You further explain the support you've given to various groups around the organization and the impact that it has made. This accumulation of accomplishments should identify you as one who goes well beyond the normal job responsibilities to ensure the company is a success. Armed with this information, your manager can seek compensation for your additional efforts. Without such ammunition, you're fighting a losing battle. Build the argument so the only conclusion is the one you want.

Stepping away from the use of literary devices, there are two other important factors that greatly impact how your messages are received: speaking positively and speaking within the realm of possibility. Positive affirmations have an uncanny ability to produce positive thought. If performed on a consistent basis, this in turn results in a pattern of behavior that will turn you into a tough-minded optimist. By practicing these behaviors, you generate a vision that you are dedicated to your cause and determined to be the best. A positive

mental attitude is infectious. Others around you will take notice and begin to respond. People tend to flock toward those who are confident and likely to succeed. No one wants to fail, and if given the opportunity to work with someone destined to win, they'll choose to be with a winner.

As you create this aura of positive energy, the tasks you have to perform will all fall within the realm of possibility. Failure ceases to be an option for you and others around you. Your words have attracted others to become part of your vision. They will share it with you and help you achieve it. The thoughts you share will create the “can do” attitude in others. It will quiet all the voices that say “it can't be done.” Creating a pattern of positive speech will lead to the positive thought and behavior that generate all the energy you need to achieve your goals. If your energy begins to run low, your Blitz team will see the light flashing on the dashboard and recharge your batteries.

We must remember that speaking puts us in a position of leadership. As we stand before others in the conference room, cafeteria, classroom or wherever, our words have the opportunity to inspire change in others. Every conversation is your chance to transfer your passion and desire to open ears and an open mind. Once others feel what you feel, you've successfully created a conduit of transference that will allow you to take more control of your own career. You will break down barriers, resistance, and attitudes that want to hold you back. As you create this verbal barrage of positive thought, you generate the brand or caliber of employee that management wants; that is, someone who can lead without the fear of failure.

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Cashing In On Organizational Change

If change was all it took to get to perfection, organizations would already be there. When it comes to change, organizations engage in it, whether they are good at it or not. Companies try to react quickly to changing market conditions, such as rising global competition, changing technology, and increasing customer demand. There is no doubt that the business world is truly dynamic. For example, in the first quarter of 2006, more than 8,000 merger and acquisition (M&A) deals took place worldwide and over 2,200 in the United States.⁵⁷ So, you think that's a lot of change? A survey conducted by the American Management Association (AMA) found that between one-third and one-half of medium and large-sized companies in the U.S. have downsized every year since 1988.⁵⁸ So, why do companies change so much? Unfortunately, it's not just the companies that are losing money that are doing all the changing. In a 1994 survey on downsizing, slightly more than 80 percent of companies that downsized in a given year were

57. Thomson Financial. First Quarter 2006 Merger & Acquisitions Review. Report downloaded from <http://banker.thomsonlib.com> on May 9, 2006.

58. American Management Association 1998 AMA *Survey Staffing and Structure Survey*, (New Jersey: Technometrica, Inc., November 1998), pp33-44.

profitable in that same year.⁵⁹ Some of the reasons cited by the survey were strategic or structural; that is, they were designed to enhance productivity, to avoid plant obsolescence, a result of mergers and acquisitions, a transfer of location, and to accommodate new technology. So, don't think it's only the organizations that are hurting for money. It could be any of them.

Furthermore, this doesn't include all of the other types of transformations organizations can make. Some of these transformations include redesign, restructuring, reengineering, rightsizing, downsizing, de-layering, continuous improvement, kaizen, quality circles, TQM, self-directed teams, six sigma, zero defects, business process improvement, and the list goes on. As organizations restructure, new positions are created, providing opportunities for your career growth. Unfortunately, these transformations are not always done for the right reasons. Many times an executive is driven to experiment on the latest business concept in response to an existing issue. These latest techniques, or fads, focus on the concerns of the moment and tend to apply to a few specific issues rather than addressing the fundamental weakness or soundness of overall business practices.

Corporate restructurings in America surged with a vengeance in the early 1990s. As responses to a prolonged recession and a more competitive global economy, as well as the end of the Cold War, American companies began to implement aggressive plans to restructure and downsize. Cost-cutting was combined with the adoption of new technology and renewed efforts to focus on core products and market strategies. Many companies shed ill-advised acquisitions made during the 1980s. A 1994 survey of 4,500 companies by the Wyatt Co. and *Fortune* magazine indicated that 86 percent of the companies had downsized during the previous five years and that they expected to do so again.

Does all of this change come at a cost? Yes, but not directly. If you're an employee of a company that reinvents itself often, you may feel that your company has violated the psychological contract. So, what is this contract? Well, many years ago, employees would spend the majority,

59. Id. 176-77, citing American Management Association, 1994 AMA Survey on Downsizing; Louis Harris and Associates, Laborforce 2000 Survey (1991).

if not all, of their career at one company. The important benefits gained were more related to self-esteem and security than pay and prestige. The long-term employees would sacrifice a great deal in maintaining their commitment to the company. This includes missing their children's milestones due to long hours and travel. In this contract, the work provided all of the necessary reward.

Unfortunately, today's employees aren't quite so easily pleased. These new workers grew up in an environment where change is commonplace and done for the best interest of the organization, not the employee. Too much change makes the employees feel as if the company doesn't consider their thoughts and interests or is dedicated to its people. Therefore, "turnabout is fair play" becomes the new mind-set. Employees have become less dedicated to the company. This is because companies fail to effectively and efficiently manage individual careers. Managers are already struggling with keeping their own job through the downsizing and maneuvering the company to remain competitive in a global market. The end result is that managers fail to meet the needs of their employees. After a few years of what may feel like neglect, employee emotions will hit its pinnacle and drive them to seek these rewards elsewhere. Thus, we give rise to the new breed of leaner, meaner professionals who focus on developing their own careers.

The disappearance of the company man is further enhanced by a new breed of CEO. These executives are what might be called a "cash flow specialist," who lacks a background in the core areas of their company, such as production, marketing, or engineering. They focus on making the company money. Unfortunately, this dominant monetary vision has resulted in less concern for employee and community programs. Combine this with the collapse of major companies due to illegal actions from executives who failed to communicate the company's decline to its own employees, and you start to see the dark picture. The extreme escalation of this type of behavior, by Enron, WorldCom, and other large public companies, prompted congress to create the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, which makes executives liable for their company's accounting landscape. Losing your job to restructuring, watching your 401k disappear to deceptive accounting practices, and a growing disinterest for the well-being of the employee are all good reasons why the relationship between employer and employee is quickly degrading.

It is not likely that these situations will improve in the near future, because companies are still fascinated with and driven by change. Organizations can internally transform themselves by changing their management structure (centralizing or decentralizing, for example), by restructuring their operations, or by altering the makeup of company assets and liabilities (i.e., financial restructuring). Organizations can also transform themselves externally by acquiring other companies, by merging with other companies, or by spinning-off or divesting undesired divisions and subsidiaries. This type of change is referred to as Portfolio restructuring. Mergers are a very common part of this type of restructuring. A merger is a method of acquiring a company without using cash. As we describe the process of engaging in a merger, try to consider where you could help out. This is exactly what you should try to do. It will demonstrate your desire embrace change, learn new skills, work with others outside your area of expertise, and help the company succeed. Typically, the first stage in a merger is the planning phase. In this phase, an integration team is usually chosen by management to perform the appropriate planning and analysis to achieve the main integration aims. While there are numerous ways to select this team, a simple example is where the CEO of the lead organization chooses one leader from his own organization and one from the merging company. These two managers are then held responsible for integrating the companies. The first goal they have is to create the new management team.

Organizations use several methods for selecting the management team, such as open placement (which allows those interested to volunteer), selection committees, or executive director selection. So, let's say the two managers create a list of desirables from their respective companies and set about critiquing the list to create the new management structure. Naturally, they'll choose those close to them and those they feel are capable. The closer you are to them, the more likely you are to make the cut. Just imagine, the CEO directs them to create the new combined team. Each manager generates a list of their ten best players. The two managers engage in a "give-and-take" debate, where they attempt to keep the individuals that support them whole-heartedly. With a list of twenty people, the staff will be selected. Seem fair? Seem complicated? In any case, these reorganizations aren't always planned using a conventional method or wisdom from other businesses. For you, this is a good thing, because it tells you what you must do; that is, find out what they've done in the past and set yourself up to be part of it.

Once the integration team is in place, the strategy for integration will be defined by the type of merger, such as absorbing a company or a hostile takeover. They may adopt one of the company's models, integrate the two, or abandon both and start over. Many companies first choose to engage in quick and profitable actions. The integration team does not only oversee the process of organization-wide integration—they drive it. They accomplish this through the creation of integration principles and the approach, synergy targets, the integration process and deliverables, high-level organizational design, employee transition plan, and so on. They are the focal point for decision making and provide a venue for problem resolution. Now, if you don't want to be part of that, then you're not looking to move up in the company. Mergers that are large in scale usually require creation of many teams, such as value creation teams, transactions teams, and specific task teams. Find a spot on one of these teams and you'll be in charge of your own destiny in the reorganization.

After the plan is established, it is passed off to the line where the plan will be implemented. This is the process, often lasting years, through which the entities truly become one. Full integration involves the people, programs, and systems of the entire (merged) organization. The process also involves considerable attention to communication, both internal and external. Quite often, companies fail to effectively communicate the integration plan, resulting in a bailout of managers from the smaller of the companies. For example, during the Chrysler and Daimler-Benz merger, many of the top executives of Chrysler left during a critical point, because the Germans didn't follow a coordinated effort to provide them with a clear definition of Chrysler's fate. This failure to effectively communicate with top executives caused several key managers to fear the worst, and they left as well. As a result, Daimler-Benz was forced to elect numerous Germans to key managerial roles in Daimler-Chrysler. This action violated the initial agreement, which stated that it was a merger of equals. This culture clash resulted in an inability of the two companies to create an effective, integrated management structure. Daimler had intended to let the Chrysler managers run their business; unfortunately, they left before this vision could be brought to light. Such instances are not uncommon in mergers and acquisitions (M&A). As one seeking to capitalize from such situations, it becomes advantageous to learn about the other culture and develop an appreciation for it. You should study the other organization to understand how they operate and how this can benefit the opera-

tions of your own company. Generate ideas about the new structure and communicate them. Take an active role in the merger, especially if the other culture recognizes those that are driven and determined to succeed.

Operational restructuring focuses primarily on analysis of the company's income and cash flows statements. Operational restructuring affects profitability. Measures can include renewed attention to business strategy, improved management and accounting systems, and better credit assessment and approval techniques. Operating costs may be cut by eliminating branches and staff. Typically, operational restructuring involves three actions: asset downsizing, expansion, and top management turnover. Each action is defined below:

- *Asset downsizing* - includes selling assets, discontinuing or suspension of production operations, and the closing of plants, offices and branches.
- *Expansion* - incorporates forming strategic alliances or joint ventures, acquiring businesses, launching new businesses, or building new facilities.
- *Top management turnover* - replaces one or more of the top executives. This manager is usually at the director or executive level.

Let's consider this type of restructuring with an electronics manufacturing company, APW. APW is a company with a focus in supporting original equipment manufacturers in the design, manufacture, and integration of electronic products to a global customer base. The markets they serve include telecommunications, networking and data equipment, medical, self-service, military, and industrial. APW began implementing several phases of cost restructuring. They completed their restructuring plans in North America by closing two of their manufacturing facilities. APW also engaged in similar actions in Europe to include headcount reductions and plant closures. Through such actions, APW was able to reduce their operating cost structure by millions of dollars. This is an example of asset downsizing, which is the most common method. Why? Well, expansion isn't going to reduce costs, and most managers aren't going to vote themselves out of a job. So, the answer becomes fairly easy for managers. If they want to reduce operating costs, reduce operations.

Financial restructuring focuses primarily on analysis of the company's balance sheet and is designed to make changes which achieve a more efficient capital structure. Companies may choose to restructure debt, raise capital, or reduce or eliminate dividends for a given year. While not as advantageous for your career, an organization may reduce required interest or principal payment on debt, extend debt maturity, or exchange stock for debt. Another type of financial restructuring is capital-raising, where the company offers new loans, stocks, or securities. Financial restructuring is usually an indication that the company is having serious financial issues. Many times these actions are taken from executives that are desperately trying to save their companies. For example, United Pan-Europe Communications N.V. engaged in a dual-restructuring, where they faced Chapter 11 in the United States and a Dutch Moratorium proceeding with the Dutch Supreme Court. In the end, they were able to offset two-thirds of their multi-billion dollar debt, which they accrued from numerous years of heavy investing in the Internet and Telecom sectors. If you run into similar situations in an organization, it should serve as a clue for you to reevaluate your position.

Okay, so organizations are making a lot of change, but is it anything to worry about if you're a good performer seeking an opportunity to move up? It has its pros and cons. If you're really good, you may have more exposure to the top executives. As organizations have been making these changes over the past two decades, they have engaged in structures that flatten the management hierarchy by reducing middle management. This results in lower-level managers reporting directly to the highest levels of management. CEOs are taking greater roles in the operation of the organization. This doesn't translate into increased responsibility for lower-level managers. It does, however, give them more autonomy in doing their work. Unfortunately, it comes at the expense of promotional opportunities since the rungs of the corporate ladder were removed with middle managers.

Another benefit of reduced hierarchical layering is the reduction of risk-exposure for competent individuals. Let's say, you have a great idea that you want to share with upper management. Within a flatter organization, you can express your ideas more freely without having to diffuse them through numerous layers of management. This will reduce any inadvertent distortion or misinterpretation of your thoughts and allow for an easier correction in such a case. As you present your

ideas, it becomes less of a requirement to present highly polished thoughts. Flatter organizations have more tolerance of “work in progress,” because upper-level managers are engaging in work previously done by their staff. This presents the situation where managers are forced to transition from accepting clearly thought-out and well-defined ideas to new innovations that may be less concrete and slightly more abstract. However, if you can continue to present them what they are accustomed to, you'll be much better off.

One last important benefit to be mentioned here, even though there are many more, is the ability to make lateral moves. When it comes to downsizing, organizations have difficulty determining who should stay or who should go, so they quite often end up losing critical skill sets. This is not to say that the lower performers aren't a first target, because they are. But what do they do when the cuts are deeper than that first level? They end up peeling off critical layers that leave holes or gaps in expertise. This is where you should consider coming to the rescue.

If you've reached your peak in your current position, these are great opportunities to prove that you're capable of excelling outside of your area of expertise. You must be more flexible. Use this new job and working environment to better position you for a better career by developing new skills that will be needed for the next step up on the ladder. Seek lateral positions that allow you to increase your authority and responsibility, as well as scope and variety. So, assuming that lateral moves can provide you some benefit, you should make the most of them. Working in different departments also helps you tap into other networks within your organization; exposing yourself to more networks can provide an advantage, because all networks have various levels of authority within the company. You may just find the one that can catapult you to the next rung on the ladder. Study these internal opportunities for a boost in your career momentum.

Smart organizations won't let restructuring alienate its employees before, during, or after the change. These companies realize that with fewer managers they must operate more efficiently and effectively. In effect, that typical role of policing others' behavior isn't feasible, because managers simply don't have the time for it. They are too busy planning, setting direction, and managing the day-to-day normal activities. Smart managers utilize a very powerful element that always exists in the company: the informal network. These networks fill in the

gray area in an organizational chart, and they exist everywhere. When organizations downsize, they run the risk of destroying informal networks by removing their core. As a consequence, they lose the most efficient routes to accomplish various tasks and must return to a less desirable method (i.e., using the organizational chart). When a key network connection is laid off, it can destroy informal bridges between departments, slow down the informational grapevine, or even cut ties with external customers. It can take years to rebuild informal networks, and if cut hard enough, the company may fail to recover.

Smart individuals learn to rebuild relationships after restructuring. They establish new cooperative relationships with managers, superiors, subordinates, and peers all over the company. They create connections within departments, functions, and divisions. They lead and build teams inside and outside of the organization. By permeating all aspects of the company, external customers included, they establish themselves as a highly valuable contributor and a less likely candidate for release. Smart workers take the initiative to create new networks that aid the organization in the creation of a clear, easily managed vision, which improves processes and communication, and revolutionizes their thinking. They take action, facilitate change, and utilize the opportunities created. Informal networks are a vital part of any organization and possess a great deal of opportunity, and we must learn to tap into them.

It should be of no surprise to anyone that change is the flavor of the decade. Companies are rearranging themselves at alarming rates. Organizational bureaucracy is becoming more complicated, while transparency and accountability are becoming leadership at all levels. The institutional investors are intensifying pressure on management to show results, while globalization and the Internet are making competition intense. The overall result is an overwhelming sea of change in management perceptions; perceptions that are transcending the distinctive lines that once defined all decisions and practices in the business world as right and wrong, good and bad, and so on. The need for the past “command and conquer” style of business leadership has been replaced by a more autonomous workforce, where employees are expected to be smart, think strategically, and act decisively.

14

Overcoming the Career Plateau

A career plateau is a point in a career where the possibility of vertical promotion within the official hierarchy becomes very low or even non-existent altogether. Many employees reach levels of career stagnation. If left unchecked, these employees will eventually adopt perceptions of having failed to self-actualize and begin to feel as though they have failed in their careers. While plateaus are sometimes chosen by employees who want to avoid the difficulties in moving up and have good benefits as well, such as provide much needed rest and relief from stress, the focus in this chapter will be to look at *Structural* and *Individual plateauing*—what they are, how it happens, and what you can do to avoid it.

Structural Plateauing

Structural plateauing means your promotions have come to an end. Structural plateauing can also be a temporary or prolonged period characterized by a lack of significant increases in pay, status, title, or formal power. Limitations to upward mobility are most likely due to organization's hierarchical approach to organizing. As long as organizations continue with this approach, opportunities will continue to be

funneled as you move up the ladder. This funnel effect means that many will not reach the top levels of management. As you move up, there are fewer positions above you. The competition for these opportunities becomes keener at every step. The pool of candidates is likely to possess the same skill sets, and they have been recognized and promoted, just like you. The Rule of Ninety Nine Percent explains this phenomenon well. It states that, typically, the highest positions only account for about 1 percent of the total positions. Therefore, 99 percent of the people in the company will plateau.⁶⁰ Now, structural plateauing is not just limited to the number of available positions, it is also impacted by competition and organizational needs. The usual competition from younger people is tougher than ever as companies promote ambitious employees who are gaining technical and global experience very early in life. This increased level of competition also comes from affirmative action programs meant to increase the levels of minorities and skilled professionals from other industrialized nations at higher rungs of the ladder. As organizations change, the value of each individual will change. Some become more valuable, some less. Some individuals become too valuable in their current role to be considered for promotion. They can't move, because there is no one to replace them. Maybe they are very good at what they do, or the position requires a specialized skill for which they are well equipped.

A common approach to alleviating structural plateauing is to make a lateral move to a position that provides the potential for more vertical mobility. Another method is to expand your expertise by focusing on learning new parts of the business, leading to new skill and talent development. Structural plateauing quite often occurs in organizations that recruit highly competitive, ambitious, and skilled people. These organizations may also be characterized by high internal competition, high rewards for successful performance, long-term commitment to its employees, and policies of holding on to less skilled, experienced people (rather than replacing them with more talented individuals). It is important to note that the identification of a career plateau occurs over time and is somewhat ambiguous. Therefore, you should utilize your team to assist you in recognizing issues that could dampen your career mobility due to the structural orientation of your company.

60. Judith Bardwick, *The Plateauing Trap*, (New York: Amacon, 1986).

Individual Plateauing

Individual plateauing is defined by characteristics such as a loss of desire for career advancement or simply a disinterest in the mobility game. It is driven by your needs and values, intrinsic motivation, reward systems, and stress. It is similar to structural plateauing in the sense that your career becomes stuck in neutral and needs to be put back in gear. An important difference between the two is that you have the power to directly modify, adapt, and overcome individual plateauing. It's not hard to find individuals within an organization that have hit a "dead spot" in their career. Maybe, you've seen a mid-level manager that has been in the same position for twelve years. He's very comfortable where he is with regards to responsibility and workload. He has little desire to move up the ladder and take on a more integral part of the organization. He's at a plateau, even if by choice.

Plateauing can be detrimental. Don't be surprised to find high performers in the organization that seem to be well suited for a higher position but are placed in positions that are very mundane, repetitive, and somewhat boring. These types of positions offer little variety and opportunities for growth and development. Over time, this lack of intrinsic motivation turns into lower job satisfaction, decreased performance, or a less than enthusiastic attitude. Of course, these responses generate a negative perception with managers that is extrapolated to define you entirely—your attitude, performance, abilities, skills and fit within the organization. This will definitely work against your job satisfaction and ultimately your upward mobility.

Lastly, stress can be derived from a career plateau, if one perceives a promotion or moving up the ladder as being desirable and important. After you graduated college, you set out on a journey to fulfill that dream. You get to that first job in a company that seems to be a decent fit for your skills. You don't really know a lot about the company's culture, because they didn't mention much in the interview, nor did you ask many questions regarding it. Nonetheless, the job seems good, so you go for it. You spend the first year getting up to speed and developing proficiency in your work. You've accomplished many of the goals that you set out for yourself. As you progress in your second year with the company, you are now a contributor, and things seem to look a little different. All those things that didn't seem to mean much in the beginning, such as pay, recognition, bonuses, and promotion, now reverber-

ate in your mind and clash with the image of the perfect job. Your work begins to improve as your contributions to the company's bottom line increases. You take on more responsibility in an effort to be recognized and, hopefully, rewarded. As year two draws to a close, you have what you feel are significant accomplishments under your belt.

Year three rolls around, and you want to move up to tackle bigger issues. Managing some employees would be an exciting challenge. So, an opening appears, and you interview for it. Once the selection has been made, you review your performance with the hiring manager, who tells you that he sensed a little frustration in your responses and that you didn't have the attitude they are looking for. As you look back on this experience, you realize that your manager never pointed this out as an issue. All of the feedback to this point had been favorable. Despite your understanding of the situation, there is now a large gap between your image of the perfect job and your current situation. You become slightly disgruntled, which diminishes your desire to perform in the same previous manner, because it isn't rewarded. You begin to alienate yourself and psychologically withdraw from the job. After another year of the same responses from the company, you decide to seek employment elsewhere.

So, how does one avoid career plateauing? Simple. You can't. However, you can manage it by remaining perceptive to changes in the organization, taking charge of your career path, and using the team to promote your aspirations, motivation, and abilities. Here are a few tips on how to do just that:

- First, it is imperative that you develop and maintain your career strategy map. This is your guide to getting what you want out of your career. If you can't visualize what you want (e.g., write it down), it will be difficult to get there.
- Use the team to help demonstrate your high aspirations, motivation, and abilities. You want management to know you have the skills needed to be promoted up through their ranks.
- Be creative and build those networks. Use people inside and outside the organization to get your work done.

- Look for what's missing in your job and try to change it. Redesign your job and push to get it implemented. Maybe, recommend new ways to do your tasks and job functions.
- For those who are tired of their present job, volunteering is a welcome change of pace. It allows you to test new situations and explore your interests.
- Analyze your current company's future potential for aptitude in performance management. Companies that are afraid to issue a negative appraisal probably won't create corrective behavior action plans.
- When looking at promotions, analyze the career path of the previous occupant. Did they plateau in that position and make a lateral transition?
- If your position fails to provide training, skill updating, and personal development, do it yourself.
- Understand your limits. Determine what you are willing to do to climb higher, which may include transferring to another department, relocating, or going back to school.
- Last, but not least, promote members of your team and have them do the same. There's no better way to create a positive reputation.

While the structural type of plateauing can't be avoided and the individual type can be avoided, there exists one other type that can wreak havoc on your career, regardless of the other types. This is *life plateauing*, or your work-life balance. As we discuss it here, work-life balance is the dilemma of managing career obligations and personal life activities effectively. If you ask most people, it is somewhat frustrating trying to orchestrate the plethora of responsibilities with a limited amount of time and resources. There can be a spillover from personal life into the work scene. For the company, the resulting issues are increased absenteeism, decreased productivity, lower morale, decreased job satisfaction, and increased sickness. It is also likely that increasing levels of stress adversely effect productivity and can manifest into abuse of sick time, tardiness, sabotage, distrust, embezzlement, task avoidance, or even violence.

Climbing the ladder is not a quick sequence of events. It's a lifelong commitment and will have to be integrated into your life, along with your other activities. The requirements for maintaining high satisfaction levels with both your career and life will change constantly. So, it's beneficial that you prioritize and build activities around them so that you maintain focus. While we all like to think we can do anything; in reality, we have significant restrictions on us that keep us from doing it perfectly. We are limited by time, money, support during tough times, opportunities, etc. Therefore, we have to plan and work a little smarter to accomplish more with what we are given. One way to do that is to use the Blitz team approach. Reduce the restriction of resources by using those of others. Build a good team and you can make considerable progress in your career and life that otherwise would be difficult to obtain.

It is up to you to determine your priorities. The more they are aligned with those of your team members, the better the results can be and the easier it will be to maintain team focus and control. While there is no one solution for how one can achieve a sufficient “balance” between the career and personal life, here are some useful suggestions:

- Always provide great support and attention to your team members. These are the individuals that generate the best return on your efforts.
- Put your energies into building positive relationships. These should be intentional investment into your team and others that can support the team.
- Ask a lot questions to determine and identify the needs of others. Your best hope for gaining influence is to make an investment in the lives of others.
- Make every effort to work only with decision makers. You can avoid any misinterpretation or miscommunication of your message by delivering it yourself.
- Stay true to your schedule and commitments. Learn to use your team and others to accomplish your activities.

- Identify a few negative habits to eliminate. Quite often when we plateau, we possess behaviors that have developed over time that actually support our emotions.
- Minimize your stress. Stress is your body's response to a demand made upon it. You need to recognize your “stressors” and determine how to offset them.
- To aid in avoiding plateaus, it's useful to become a child once again. Don't be afraid to fail.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help. Use your team to help you get things done. You can get a lot more done with less effort by Blitzing the Ladder.
- Pace yourself. Take time to plan your career carefully. Make smart moves and try not to give in to pressures to make snap decisions.
- Keep healthy. CEOs often complain of the sacrifices that must be made, such as personal time, being with family, and extensive and exhausting travel.
- Keep a positive attitude. The more you allow your mind to fill with negative thoughts, the less room you have for positive and productive ones.
- Even if you're at a plateau, take charge of your career. Expand your position by looking for new responsibilities.
- Listen and be empathetic. Be sensitive, compassionate, and understanding. You may be surprised at what you hear or how often others want to speak with you, when you listen.

Career plateaus, as with change in general, are unavoidable. Therefore, embrace it and learn to utilize it to improve your career options. Use your team to analyze each situation and determine all possible scenarios. Choose the best route and put all your energy toward it. One reason many careers stop is that the individual ceases to promote themselves. You should make it a daily goal to do one thing that promotes you and your skills, even if it is done vicariously through your Blitz team. Many people focus on all of the “no” responses they get in

trying to reach their desired level of success. This is counterproductive, because you will certainly get a lot of them. Instead, focus your efforts on getting that one “yes” that can thrust you into the fast lane.

Rising Above the Challenges

Climbing the corporate ladder is a long and hard battle, so much so that many choose not to take the challenge. But, if you need a little motivation, just consider the fact that the ratio of CEO pay to average worker pay increased from 301 to 1 in 2003 to 431 to 1 in 2004. By contrast, in 1990, the average large company CEO made just 107 times the pay of the average production worker.⁶¹ If your motivation is purely financial, these numbers should definitely do the trick. But, for the typical CEO, the money isn't the prime motivator. It's all about the four P's. These are pay, power, perks, and prestige. Of course, many CEOs are also driven by personal challenge, importance of the job, and career advancement. If you've come this far, you obviously share in some of these traits. But these aren't enough to propel you up the ladder. The journey can take the majority of your working life. For the most part, the CEO will take office in or near the age of fifty.⁶² If you're young and low on the ladder, the

61. Sarah Anderson and John Cavanagh, "Executive Excess 2005: Defense Contractors Get More Bucks for the Bang." 12th Annual CEO Compensation Survey, 2005, August 30.

62. Louis Boone and David Kurtz, "CEOs: A Group Profile" Business Horizons, 1988, July-August, pp38-42.

voyage for such a position will challenge you in ways you've never imagined. This chapter will help you make the most of both individual and team motivation.

Individual versus Team Motivation

As an individual, the “system” can wear you down, so you run out of....everything. In some instances, others will seek to help you lose faith. After all, the next position you take may be desired by others who will compete with you or just make sure you don't get it. However, you'll have your team to support, encourage, and guide you toward the achievement of your goals. Leading and inspiring your team and those around you can be arduous at times. Sometimes, you'll get so exhausted from motivating others that you will forget to motivate yourself. And who wants to follow an uninspired leader? You have to remain inspired in order to inspire others. The factors that typically motivate a team are not necessarily the same for an individual. It's important to know the difference between the two. You'll need them both.

Our individual motivation comes from the fulfillment of higher order needs. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, higher order needs include love, esteem, and self-fulfillment. As a lower order need is filled, a higher-order need will take its place. So, imagine that you already feel safe and secure (lower-order needs). Then, you'll seek to belong, give, and receive friendship. However, you're part of a dedicated team, so these needs should be filled, which allows you to focus on self-esteem and self-respect. These are most important and are affected by your reputation. But wait—you don't have much of an issue with reputation, because your team helps to ensure it remains in good shape. This leaves you the opportunity to work on self-fulfillment or self-development. With the other needs now out of the way, you're ahead of the game and can focus on developing skills that further your career.

As previously mentioned, Maslow tells us that an individual needs to fulfill higher order needs to feel motivated. This makes perfectly good sense. If you are at work and haven't eaten for days, you most likely won't be too concerned with your self-development. Herzberg translated these motivation factors into more specific generators that people

do on the job. These internal factors are related to your career and work content and so include personal growth, advancement, recognition, achievement and interesting work. Herzberg also found others related factors that serve to aid in motivation. These are autonomy, feedback, skill variety and task identity.

Before we discuss these, it is important to note that these factors are only applicable when utilized in the proper environment. To understand this environment, Herzberg defined the Hygiene factors. These factors include the company you're working in, its policies and administration, working conditions, salary, status, security, interpersonal relations, and the supervision you receive. Hygiene factors do not serve to motivate but must be present for you to be able to be motivated. An absence of any of these factors can result in dissatisfaction, something that is often misconstrued as de-motivating. As an individual, you'll have to work to maintain all of these. As a member of a Blitz team, you'll have the support those of your team too. Simply being part of the team will provide some of these automatically such as interpersonal relations, status, and security.

Other differences between individual and team motivation include goal setting, efficacy, task structure, performance and effectiveness, feedback, and organization. Each is defined below:

- Goal Setting - Individuals seek to set explicit, challenging, individual goals, whereas teams tend to develop goals that are more complex at the individual and team level. Individual goals made within teams should be created so that the individual goals are inline with the team goals.
- Efficacy - For individuals, self-efficacy is focused on just that, the *self*. Collective efficacy is basically the team's faith in their own abilities to organize and execute effective actions that produce a higher-level of accomplishment.
- Task structure - Design tasks with high levels of task identity so individuals gain a sense of accomplishment and recognition from the opportunity to perform a whole and visible task. For teams, these tasks should be directed towards the accomplishment of the team's goals that has an impact on all team members.

- Feedback - Individual performance and effectiveness are based on one's skills and knowledge, while the results will be directly related to their ability to utilize both. Teams, on the other hand, are a little more complicated and affected by the size, norms, and cohesiveness of the members.

Individual motivation is your primary responsibility and should be considered to be extremely important, because your attitude has an impact the performance of the team. The Blitz team is considerably more effective when all members are self-driven.

Team Motivation Factors

Motivating your team will be a function of how well the team members and your working environment support the needs of the team. If everyone has created a strategy map as described previously, you should get some sense of what each member needs. It should be of no surprise that there is more than one type of motivational factor that can motivate a team. For your team, one of the biggest factors deals with skill variety, which has the benefit of bringing a wider range of knowledge to the team. The width of such knowledge is defined by those you choose to be on your team. Hopefully, they come from different areas of expertise and bring significantly different skills sets to the team. These benefits for skill variety in a team are twofold. First, it serves as an individual motivator in that using various skills avoids boredom and monotony. Secondly, team members benefit from these individual differences. The skills you identify in your strategy map as critical to your next promotion could already be mastered by one of your team members. For example, if you set out to improve your public speaking or presentation skills, demonstrating poor speaking skills during your first or second attempt will impact the perception of your managers. It could be the last time you get in front of your coworkers. Developing and practicing these skills with your team prevents you from damaging upper management's perception of you.

There are several factors you need to monitor to ensure your team maintains high levels of motivation, such as solidarity, security, vision and responsibility. These factors also have a tendency to support themselves but not enough to allow them to exist independently.

- Solidarity - refers us to the bond we have with our team members and defines the boundary between serving the needs of the team and serving the needs of self. This sense of commitment and belonging is a benefit of being part of a team, a factor that is not usually achieved by individuals.
- Security - this type of security will be in keeping your job, which hinges on how well you handle perception. Being part of a team, the perception of the team's values cast a broader light than an individual and can help to avoid a misinterpretation by others.
- Vision - identifies the direction of the team and what the team should be when it gets there. The vision will empower each team member to take the initiative to work with little to no support from the team and make decisions in the best interest of the team. Without such communication, the life and welfare of the team loses focus.
- Individual responsibility - leads to an improved ability for problem solving, taking initiative, and creative thinking. Responsibility can be gained by adapting a shared leadership in the team.

Freedom of Action

Your teammates will be empowered with the authority to make decisions and take actions in the best interest of the team. It is best if you choose team members that are trustworthy and capable of acting independently. This is not a normal work team where the team must be led by a leader who provides clear directions on what to do and when to do it. Your team has already been delegated certain tasks to act in your best interest, so allow them to carry out your career strategy independently. Allow them to come up with creative solutions for the complex goals you seek to meet. The more guidance you provide, the less creativity will go into the strategy.

Therefore, your objective is to make clear your expectations for each team member's performance, yet to lightly define boundaries. To illustrate this concept, consider these possible boundaries: safety, resources, authority, and standards. Safety will most likely not deal with personal or physical safety but more related to the safety of one's reputation and employment. Each team member must be aware of the

impact that their actions can have on how managers view your performance, skills, and abilities. The team's actions and behaviors should always highlight you and the team in a positive manner.

With regards to the resources the team can utilize, begin by reviewing the career strategy maps. This review should also incorporate the availability of resources including job-related information, required services and support from others, team member task preparation, time availability, work environment, management commitment, and external individual support. For example, knowing your internal resources such as the key individuals in your trust, advice, and communication networks allows the team to obtain results much quicker with less effort. Your external resources may lend to partnership development where you work with other groups and leaders outside of your company to influence your management.

About the Author



Todd Rhoad's expertise is drawn from twenty years of experience as an engineer struggling to climb the corporate ladder through government, private, public, profit and non-profit organizations. Thinking education alone would be sufficient to climb the ladder, Todd obtained a Master's Degree in both Electrical Engineering and Business Administration. He has worked in numerous industries from consumer products to high technology research and development while serving in roles from engineer to finally reaching the managerial ranks. He is currently Managing Director at Bt Consulting in Austin, TX. With over 30 publications in journals, books and conferences, he is a frequent speaker and presenter at symposiums and conferences.

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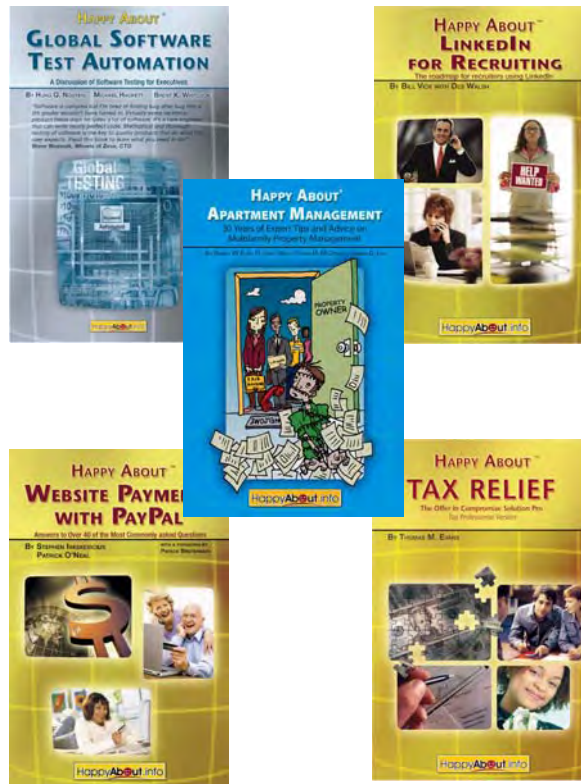
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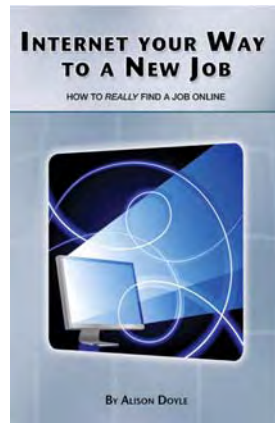


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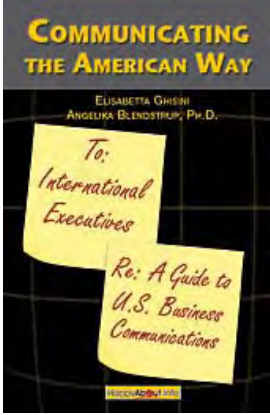
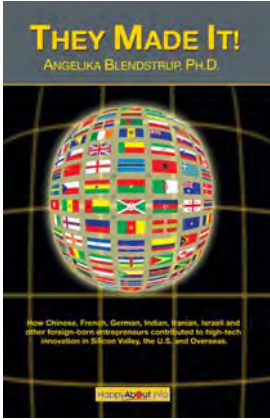
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"I feel that the Blitz Approach gives me more control over my career. My team takes my accomplishments to the right level to get me the exposure I need to advance my career."

Carlos Martinez, Business Development Manager, Pilgrim Services, LLC

"I never really wanted to chase the corporate ladder because of all the politics surrounding it. This technique is brilliant in that it keeps you away from it and if you get in trouble, your team is there to bail you out."

Dale Jinks, Electrical Engineer, Sonoco Products Company